Lou Harrison: Experimentalism and "Otherness"

SUNG, Kei Yan

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Philosophy

in

Historical Musicology

December 2007

Thesis/Assessment Committee

Professor Cheong Wai Ling (Chair)

Professor Michael McClellan (Thesis Supervisor)

Professor Greta Olson (Committee Member)

Professor David F. Urrows, Hong Kong Baptist University
(External Examiner)

Abstract of thesis entitled:

Lou Harrison: Experimentalism and "Otherness"

Submitted by Sung Kei Yan

for the degree of master in philosophy in historical musicology

at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in December, 2007

Abstract

Lou Harrison, the father of the American gamelan, is one of the most prominent figures in the development of musical experimentalism. Through transethnic elements, just intonation and innovative instrumental building, Harrison imparted a general sense of "otherness" to his music. The aim of my thesis is to investigate the "otherness" of Lou Harrison's music. Apart from that, I will also address concomitant questions and relate his use of transethnic[1] elements to a broader, contextualized discussion of "otherness" from a cultural viewpoint.

To begin my thesis, I will examine the American experimental tradition and the context in which Harrison lived and worked in the twentieth-century. I will emphasize contemporaries with whom Harrison had close relationships. This will help illustrate how Harrison's compositional philosophy was influenced by his peers, and put his innovations within a historical framework. After having a better understanding of the general context, I will discuss the biography of Harrison with a special focus on the incidents which are related to transethnicism.

[1] Transethnicism has been defined as "the employment and evocation of musical styles and technique from culture other than the composer's own."
Lou Harrison, *Music Primer* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1971), 45.

In order to demonstrate the relationship of transethnicism and "otherness", two works by Harrison, *Concerto in Slendro* (1961) and *Varied Trio* (1986), will be discussed. By closely examining the above works, I can show how a consideration of transethnicism and "otherness" broadens our understanding of Harrison's music. The use of transethnic elements also has cultural importance with respect to identity. I will discuss transethnicism in opposition to the Eurocentric mainstream. Experimental composers used transethnic elements to establish a shared musical identity. This special identity reflected a desire to distinguish themselves from mainstream composers.

路．哈理森：實驗主義和差異性

摘要

有「美國甘美蘭之父」之稱的路．哈理森(Lou Harrison)在實驗主義(experimentalism)的發展中有著舉足輕重的地位。他經常把純律(just intonation)、跨民族元素(transethnic element)及新發明的樂器運用到作品裏，這些元素為他的音樂帶來差異性(otherness)。

本論文透過對分析他的作品 *Concerto in Slendro* 及 *Varied Trio*，從而深入了解跨民族元素如何令他的作品表現出音樂上的差異性與及反映文化層面上的差異性，特別是身份問題。

Table of Content

Introduction

Lou Harrison (1917-2003), the father of the American gamelan, is one of the most prominent figures in the development of musical experimentalism. Through transethnic elements, just intonation and innovative instrumental building, Harrison imparted a general sense of "otherness" to his music. My thesis revolves around the use of these elements in his works. I will closely examine the music for transethnic traits and other novelties. Apart from that, I will also address questions concomitant with them and relate his use of transethnic elements to a broader, culturally contextualized discussion of "otherness", especially the issue of identity. Indeed, the central aim of my thesis is to investigate the "otherness" of Lou Harrison's music. The concept of "otherness" entails a sense of normative "self" to be expressed, and with respect to Harrison this means positioning his work within the context of Western musical standards. As an experimental composer, the Eurocentric music tradition was an ideological burden to Harrison. The use of transethnic traits, just intonation and the novel use of musical instruments created the impression of musical alterity within Harrison's music that contrasts sharply with the Eurocentric tradition he had inherited.

To begin my thesis, I examine the American experimental tradition and the context in which Harrison lived and worked in the twentieth century. I emphasize contemporaries with whom Harrison had close relationships, e.g. his teacher Henry Cowell, and Harry Partch. This will help illustrate how Harrison's compositional philosophy was influenced by his peers, and put his innovations within a historical and cultural framework.

After examining of the general context in which he lived and worked, I discuss the biography of Harrison with a special focus on those incidents that are related to transethnicism. Throughout his life, the mark of transethnic influence can be found easily. For example, the influence of Asian art can be dated back as early as Harrison's childhood.

More specifically, transethnic traits are manifested in his music at two levels: physical and musical. On the physical level, non-Western or newly invented musical instruments inspired by non-Western models are used in his works. These instruments are employed together with Western instruments, e.g. orchestra, or as solo instruments. For example, traditional Indonesian gamelan, newly-invented American gamelan, Korean, Chinese and Japanese musical are Harrison's favorites

and are frequently heard in his works with or without Western instruments. Such novel combinations of musical instruments had a significant role in creating a particular sense of "otherness" in his compositions. On the musical level, Harrison incorporated the transethnic elements, e.g. texture, tuning etc, in his music.

Similarly, temperament has also played an important role in Harrison's music, particularly just-intonation of which he is fond. Just intonation will be examined not only in conjunction with transethnic elements, but also as a revival of a historical method of tuning from the West, a means by which Harrison distances himself from modernity in tradition and practice.

In order to demonstrate the relationship between transethnicism and "otherness", two representative works by Harrison, *Concerto in Slendro* (1961) and *Varied Trio* (1986), will be discussed. Harrison has an enormous amount of output that can be regarded as transethnic. *Concerto in Slendro* is one of his early transethnic works. It was composed during his visit to Tokyo in 1960, a crucial event in his life. This work shows a marked change in his style, and after it transethnic elements became more and more prominent in his music. Harrison's interest transethnicism grew and culminated in the 1980s, and his *Varied Trio* is an

excellent example of it. This work has five movements in which Harrison blends the Western instruments with the transethnic elements perfectly.

In the conclusion, I summarize my findings in order to show how a consideration of transethnicism and "otherness" broadens our understanding of Harrison's music. The use of transethnic elements also has an important cultural dimension. I discuss transethnicism in connection with the Eurocentric mainstream. Such questions also have bearing on the relationship of transethnicism to twentieth-century culture and the identity of experimental composers like Harrison.

Chapter 1 General Background Information

Part I – The American Context: Second Half of Twentieth Century

Edward T. Cone mentioned in his article on Roger Sessions that "the American past is the European past and that the foundation provided by the great line [meaning the Austro-German tradition, i.e. Beethoven, Brahms, etc.] is basic to the development of music in the United States as well as Europe."[1] There is no doubt that the development of art music in the United States is closely associated with European traditions. It can be regarded as an extension of a Eurocentric stream.

The musical ties between the U.S. and Europe where greatly increased when, in the first half of the twentieth century, many prominent European composers chose to spend part of their career in America due to political reasons. In 1933, Hitler became chancellor of Germany, and the Nazis eventually banned all Jews from holding university posts.[2] Therefore, Arnold Schoenberg left the Prussian Academy of the Arts and moved to New York in October, 1933. Similarly, Paul Hindemith, although not Jewish, but labeled a "cultural Bolshevik" by the Nazis,

---

[1] Edward T. Cone, "In Defense of Song: The Contribution of Roger Sessions," *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (1975):97.

[2] Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 102.

also left Germany, arriving the United States in 1940.[3] In addition to Schoenberg and Hindemith, many other European composers immigrated to the United States at this time, including Bartòk, Stravinsky, Milhaud and Varèse. They brought along their compositional ideals and spread their knowledge by teaching young, local composers.

In the United States, many of these composers were sponsored by universities. Since the early twentieth century, a number of prominent American teaching posts in the academy were taken up by composers from Europe. The academic bodies provided job security and an environment in which individuals could compose freely. This allowed them to develop further certain avant-garde approaches, for example twelve-tone and serial processes, which they brought along from Europe. Under the patronage of universities, these leading European composers taught at many famous educational institutions. For example, Hindemith taught at Yale University from 1940 to 1953.[4] Schoenberg taught at Malkin Conservatory in Boston in 1933.[5] However, he could not stand the weather of New England, and he swiftly moved to Los Angeles after one year. In 1935, he was employed as a professor at the University of California at Los Angeles and remained there until his

[3] Ibid, 103.
[4] Ibid, 102.
[5] Ibid.

death in 1951.[6] Many talented young composers were his students. Some of them were pioneers of experimentalism, including John Cage and Lou Harrison, the subject of this thesis.

The influence of Schoenberg on the development of art music in the United States was enormous. He had devised the twelve-tone method and first applied it in his *Five Piano Pieces,* op.23, in 1923. He brought the method to the United States, and his career as a professor encouraged the spread of twelve-tone method. By the 1950s, the twelve-tone method began to dominate academic composition. Many American composers, including Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt, were influenced by Schoenberg and built upon the serial techniques that Schoenberg and his pupils had pioneered.

Although the early development of art music in the United States was mostly Eurocentric, in the second half of twentieth century, many young local composers, particularly advocates of experimentalism,[7] sought new sources of inspiration. Although Cage and Harrison were students of Schoenberg, they preferred other

---

[6] Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York: Norton & Company, 1996), 786.

[7] More about the experimentalism will be discussed in next section.

paths than the twelve-tone method. Among the numerous possible sources of inspiration, Asian culture, particularly its music, was the most fascinating to them. Of course, they were not the first composers to seek out new inspiration from other cultures. European composers, such as Debussy had already been fascinated by Asian culture in the nineteenth century. Having heard an Indonesian gamelan performance at the 1889 International Exhibition in Paris, he mimicked the sonority and scale type of the gamelan in his piano work *Pagodes*, the first piece from *Estampes*.

Although Cage and Harrison were both interested in Asian culture, they chose very different directions in their own experimental music. Cage was a pioneer in indeterminacy. Even though they were very close friends, Harrison was not a proponent of chance's operations. The music of indeterminacy successfully dislocated Cage from the Eurocentric tradition.[8] When compared to total serialism, indeterminacy occupies the other extreme. The advocates of indeterminacy argued in favor of randomness; unplanned sound from environment, for example, could be regarded as music. The emphasis on randomness and environmental sound insures that every performance will be radically different and unpredictable. The nature of

[8] John Corett, "Experimental Oriental: New Music and Other Others," in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference Represetntation, and Appropriation in Music,* edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 164.

indeterminate music greatly deviated from the Eurocentric tradition.

Although indeterminacy was one possible avenue to seek freedom from the influence of Eurocentric tradition, Lou Harrison chose another means of imparting a special "otherness" to his music, a particular kind of experimentalism using transethnic elements, which will be considered below as a part of a more general discussion of experimentalism.

Part II Experimentalism

It is hard to define experimentalism in one single sentence. Generally speaking, the Western art music tradition was regarded as the mainstream or norm in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. The Western art music tradition is descended from the European art music tradition, also referred as Eurocentric tradition in this thesis. The Western art music tradition excluded folk song and is regarded as high culture. Experimental music, as it is commonly understood, lies outside this mainstream but has to be compared with it. Experimental composers not only challenged the limits of acceptability, i.e. pushed music to a more "advanced" level, but also pushed it "backward", e.g. using ancient Greek modes, and "outward", e.g. using transethnic elements.[9] Experimental

[9] David Nicholls, "Avant-garde and Experimental Music," in *The Cambridge History of American Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19-20.

composers disassociated themselves from the established Eurocentric conventions, symbolically rejecting European influence. However, experimental music still falls within the Western art music tradition. For example, the Western art music tradition privileges the originality in music, and experimental composers also emphasized originality. In short, the experimentalists could not totally escape from the Western art music tradition, but only differentiate themselves from the mainstream.

For the purposes of this thesis, experimental music has to be distinguished from what is typically referred to as avant-garde music. Taking the Western art music tradition as a reference point, the avant-garde is linked with that tradition and its aesthetic values but occupies an extreme position within it. It pushes the boundaries of established norms but without breaking ties to them. The twentieth-century avant-garde methods include twelve-tone method and serial procedures. In contrast, experimental music challenged the limitations of that tradition and struggled to remain outside it.[10] Experimentalists freely composed and explored new musical language, ignoring the traditional restrictions. Originality became a fundamental element in the development of experimentalism. Composers were allowed to express their innovative ideas to the fullest extent. Originality was

[10] John Rockwell, *All American Music: Composition in Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 91. David Nicholls, 20.

manifested in various aspects of experimental music, e.g. performance technique, instrumentation, tuning, use of transethnic elements, etc. Needless to say, all of these elements found there way into the music of Lou Harrison.

The term, 'transethnic', was used in *Music Primer*, by Harrison. He wrote, "this whole round living world of music – the human music – rouses and delights me, it stirs me to a 'trans-ethnic,' a planetary music."[11] Transethnicism has been defined as "the employment and evocation of musical styles and techniques from cultures other than the composer's own."[12] For example, the use of Asian musical elements in Harrison's works can be regarded as transethnic. It is a manifestation of multiculturalism in music.

One of the prominent features common among experimental composers is a fascination with Asian music. This was particularly true among American West Coast composers like Cowell, Partch, Cage and Harrison. They sought new inspiration from Asia, e.g. the repertory of the Indonesian gamelan or Japanese *Ongaku*, Chinese instrumental music and Cantonese opera, as well as Korean and Indian music. This was partly due to the geographic proximity of the West coast to

---

[11] Lou Harrison, *Music Primer* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1971), 45.
[12] David Nicholls, 'Transethnicism and the American Experimental Tradition,' *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1996), 570.

Asia. Also, there were high concentrations of Asian immigrants living on the West coast of the United States and Canada. This provided ample opportunities for the experimentalist to encounter and listen to alternative music, thereby enriching their aural experience. For example, Henry Cowell, who was born in California, grew up hearing more Chinese, Japanese and Indian classical music than he did Western music.[13] Harrison also grew up in a similar environment, which will be discussed in next chapter.

The presence of Asians and Asian Americans on the West coast gave the experimental composers readier access to Asian music than many other places in the U.S. Therefore, the exploration of Asian music was made possible. The experimental composers found alternative scale types, tonal production, musical language and instruments. Firstly, the equal-tempered scales from the Western tradition are remarkably different from the scales types in Asian music. The "exotic" scales provided excellent new material for the experimental composer. These include the pentatonic scale used in Chinese music as well as the *slendro* and *pelog* used in Indonesian gamelan, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

[13] Ibid, 520.

Another important inspiration from Asian sources was the emphasis on tonal production. Tonal production refers to how a sound is produced by the player. Due to the restrictions of traditional western notation, pitch and rhythm have generally occupied higher priorities than other musical parameters. Although tonal production as an end in itself had already been emphasized by various composers, notably Debussy and Messiaen, the exposure to Asian music raised the awareness of the potential of tonal production further. For example in Chinese *qin* music, tonal production is one of the most important elements. The sonority depends on how the player produces the sound on the *qin.* If the player neglects the details of tonal production, the music will lose its unique character. Music like that for the *qin* inspired the experimentalists to explore new possibilities of tonal production in traditional Western instruments and to construct new, home-made instruments. For example, the experimentalists requested performers to play traditional instruments in non-traditional ways. A pianist may be requested to use a mallet to knock the metal frame of a piano. A harpist may rap the sound box and use finger nails to pluck the strings to produce a metallic sonority.

Musical instruments from Asia also provided more choices for the

experimentalists. Instruments like Chinese zheng, Japanese *shakuhachi*, Korean *kayagùm* and Indian *jalataranga* broadened their options. Both Western and Asian musical instruments could be used in a single work. The new choices gave birth to cross-cultural hybrids. The novel combinations of Western and Asian instruments in these hybrids widened the auditory experiences of audiences. In addition, the Asian musical instruments provided new models for instrument building. The unique sonority of Indonesian gamelan, produced by metallophones, attracted the attention of numerous Western composers. The experimentalists, particularly Harrison, modeled their own instruments on these metallophones.

Chapter 2 Biographical Context

Biography – A Transethnic Overview

Childhood – An Early Encounter

Lou Silver Harrison was born in Portland, Oregon, on May 14, 1917, into a well-to-do family. He was the first son of Calline Lillian Silver and Clarence Maindenis Harrison. Calline Silver's grandfather was an entrepreneur. He owned a factory which produced farming machinery. In 1911, Silver inherited a part of the estate from her grandfather.[1] She used the inheritance to buy a tire business for Harrison's father and also built an apartment building for the family soon after his birth. In addition, Silver was an art lover and collected many Asian art objects. She decorated her home with her collections, e.g. Persian carpets, Japanese grass paper used as wall paper, etc. In contrast, the front lobby of the apartment building was in Italian Renaissance style.[2] Therefore, the composer grew up in an environment that drew upon both European and Asian artistic traditions, foreshadowing his later preference. Furthermore, Harrison's mother sent her son for training in various arts at an early age. In particular, the piano and violin lessons he took as a child laid the foundation for his musicianship. When he was in high school, after taking Latin

---

[1] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.
[2] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, 'Photo Gallery,' fig. 2.

lessons, Harrison became interested in Gregorian chant and studied chant with two priests at Mission Dolores in San Francisco. He also studied composition and composed piano and chamber music. However, Harrison subsequently dismissed his early works, and most have been lost.

Harrison also took regular ballroom dance classes. By and large, the early training in music and dance was influential. Dance training at an early age raised the composer's sensitivity to rhythm and foreshadowed his preference for complex rhythm in his early compositions, e.g. *Fugue* (1942). These early experiences cultivated Harrison's wide interest in music and dance and laid the foundation for his brilliant development in music and modern dance later in his life.

1930s: San Francisco Years

In the 1930s, Harrison was a young student in San Francisco. He had graduated from high school in 1934 and had had more cross-cultural experiences at that time. In the 1930s, he was a frequent visitor to Chinatown, where many immigrants were from southern China and spoke Cantonese. Within the Chinese community, there were some Chinese theaters run by the immigrants. Harrison

was a regular member of the audience there. As he recalled:

> Chinatown was in the middle of the city. In those days Chinese merchants entertained one another and there were clubs. You could walk along the street and hear a flute or a viol played by street vendors or a merchant in his lair. Then I discovered the Chinese opera, and that became a more or less steady entertainment. I would have Chinese dinner with friends from San Francisco State and then we'd go to the opera. *I went to the Chinese opera very frequently.* Of course *I had seen many, many more Chinese operas than Western operas.* One couldn't understand the dialogue, but you knew what was going on. We'd turn to each other sometimes in the pantomimes and say "It's not subtle anymore, is it?" It was very comfortable and family-oriented, with people sitting at tables.[3] [Emphasis mine]

For Lou Harrison, this early exposure to Chinese music was memorable. The interest in other cultures thus dates back to his teenage years. Later in 1971, he applied the recitative style of Cantonese opera in his puppet opera called *Young Caesar.* Moreover, his interest in Chinese music did not fade. In 1960s, he studied *zheng* performance in Taiwan, which will be discussed later.

1940-50s – A Reorganization of Approach

The 1940s were an uneasy time for Harrison. In summer of 1943, the ambitious young man decided to move to New York from Los Angeles, where he

---

[3] Quoted in Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, 141

had been working and studying since 1942. The move was made possible by an invitation to work as an accompanist in a dance company led by his friend, Lester Horton. However, this was only part of the reason for his move. Another impetus for him to move to New York was to advance his career in the music field. Upon his arrival, Cage, who was now living on the east coast, introduced Harrison to Virgil Thomson, who was a critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* as well as a composer. With help from Thomson, Harrison had an easy entrée into New York musical circles. Thomson arranged some writing jobs for Harrison to supplement his income as an accompanist. The writing consisted mainly of concert reviews. As a result, Harrison was introduced to important figures within the musical community and built up his professional connections. Gradually, he received more job offers, e.g. music editing, commissions for composition, reviewing, conducting, etc. The workload became more and more heavy. Also, the living environment was extremely difficult for him. He was unable to cope with the tremendous noise of Manhattan. Eventually, Harrison could not stand the stress and in 1947 suffered a nervous breakdown. Other contributing factors to his collapse were the failure of several relationships and government repression of homosexual activity.[4] In 1930s and 1940s, laws prohibiting homosexual behavior

[4] For a discussion of gay life in the United States at about this time see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New

were to be found in all fifty states.[5] He was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for nine months. The tranquility in the hospital allowed Harrison to recover and reconsider his priorities with respect to his compositional career. He dismissed the extremely dissonant style had had cultivated previously and decided to explore diatonicism, expansive melody and new compositional tools. This decision guided his direction in his career in later decades.

1960s – A Special Decade for Harrison

In the middle of 1950s', Harrison returned to California and settled in Aptos, located in Santa Cruz County. The environment of Aptos provided Harrison with a quiet and isolated environment. It allowed him to fully recover from the nervous breakdown. However, after using up the money from his Guggenheim Fellowship, which he had been awarded in 1954,[6] he faced financial problems again. In order to earn a living, he had to take jobs unrelated to music, e.g. as a fire fighter, veterinary assistant and florist. Although life was difficult, Harrison never gave up

---

York: Basic Books 1994), and John D'Emilio. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[5] Rhonda Rivera, "Homosexuality and the Law," in *Homosexuality: Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues,* ed. William Paul, James D. Weinrich, John C. Gonsiorek and Mary E. Hotvedt (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1982), 324.

[6] This is the second Guggenheim Fellowship that he received in May 1954. The first Guggenheim Fellowship was awarded to him in 1952.
Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 50.

music. After work, he would spend his time composing and building new musical instruments. He also strove to find some freelance jobs related to music and remained active in musical circles. For instance, he wrote liner notes for recordings of Ives's violin sonatas during this time.

After struggling for nearly half a decade, another opportunity opened up for Harrison. He was invited to present a paper at the East-West Music Encounter Conference, which was held in Toyko, April 1961. His first trip to Asia was made possible by the funding of the Rockefeller Foundation. Many important musical figures also attended the conference, e.g. Thomson, Cowell and two authoritative Indonesian gamelan experts: Colin McPhee and Mantle Hood. However, Harrison's attention was drawn by two other figures: Lee Hye Ku from Korea and Liang Tsai Ping from Taiwan. In 1962, with the additional funding of Rockefeller Grant, Harrison made a second Asian trip. He studied Korean court music with Lee in Korea and studied Chinese instrumental music with Liang, particularly *zheng*, a Chinese horizontal zither with bridge, in Taiwan. This second Asian trip enabled Harrison to study Korean and Chinese instrumental music in a more serious way. His knowledge of Asian music was greatly enhanced and improved. He was not only fascinated by the sound of these instruments but now acquired a

fundamental understanding of the principle of Chinese and Korean music. In a work composed after the Asia trips, *Pacifika Rondo* (1963), he integrated Asian and Western elements through the use of various musical instruments. In this work, the Asian instruments, e.g. *daiko* (Japanese barrel drum), *kayagùm* (Korean horizontal zither with bridge), *zheng*, *sheng* (Chinese mouth organ), *jalataranga* (Indian percussion), etc, are blended with the Western instruments, including piano, organ, flute, piccolo, celesta and vibraphone.

In addition to the Asian trips, another important event also happened at about this time. They soon fell in love with each other and became life partners. Colvig was an electrician and amateur musician. He also had a similar interest in acoustics and tuning. Together, Colvig and Harrison built their own experimental instruments with experimental tunings. They built the first American gamelan with steel conduit pipe using just intonation. With his expert knowledge of electronics, Colvig improved the accuracy of their homemade instruments by using an oscilloscope to tune them.

1970s: Reunion with Indonesian Gamelan

Harrison's interest in the Indonesian gamelan can be dated back to the 1930s

when he heard a recording of an Indonesian gamelan owned by his roommate, Dorothy James Russell.[7] Also, while he attended the course taught by Cowell,[8] Harrison heard more recordings of Indonesian gamelans. He was immediately attracted by the sound of the gamelan. However, as Harrison recalled in an interview in 1994, "Henry [Cowell] didn't explain any of the procedures of gamelan," and "it was the sound itself that attracted me."[9]

After that, Harrison did not have any chance to hear a live gamelan performance until the late 1930s. In June 1939, Harrison finally heard a live performance of gamelan at the Golden Gate International Exposition, on Treasure Island, San Francisco. It was a Balinese gamelan performance at the Dutch East Indies pavilion.[10] Although he was greatly fascinated by it, he did not have chance to study the instrument seriously until 1975. In between 1939 to 1975, his love of gamelan music did not fade and manifested itself in many works written during this period. Despite the lack of opportunity to learn traditional gamelan, certain traits of gamelan music influenced his compositional philosophy strongly. Some of his gamelan influenced works which were composed before studying

---

[7] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, "Lou Harrison and the American Gamelan," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (1999), 148

[8] The issue related to the course taught by Cowell will be discuss in next section.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

gamelan are *Concerto for violin and percussion* (1959), *Concerto in Slendro* (1961) and *Concerto for Organ and Percussion Orchestra* (1973). The more prominent gamelan features in his works that are composed before his study of traditional gamelan are gamelan inspired sonorities and the use of percussion orchestra.

However, the influence of gamelan features became more and more prominent. The works composed in the 1980s, e.g. *Varied Trio* and *Grand Duo,* not only include gamelan inspired sonorities and percussion orchestra but also compositional procedures derived from Indonesian musical practice.[11] This change was the result of intensive study of gamelan performances in the mid-1970s.

As mentioned in last section, Harrison had met Colvig in 1967. As an electrician, Colvig helped the composer a lot with instrument building. In his own instruments Harrison blended his dual ideals: just intonation and gamelan-like percussion ensemble. The best known result was his "American gamelan." The idea for the "American gamelan" was triggered by the production of the puppet

[11] The detail of gamelan compositional procedures is discussed in chapter 2.

opera, *Young Caesar* (1971). This work provided a golden opportunity to integrate all his "favorites" in a single work. The first set of "American gamelan" was built for this particular puppet opera and is now referred as "Old Granddad". However, Harrison and Colvig did not intend to copy the Indonesian gamelan directly. Rather, the new instrument is just conceptually in debt to the Indonesian gamelan. They used the American gamelan as a way to realize their instrument building goals. "Old Granddad" is a percussion ensemble including large metallophones made by filing aluminum slabs to serve as keys with tin cans of different lengths serving as resonators. The small metallophones are made up of conduit tubing. The ensemble also includes bell-like instruments, which are made from cut-off oxygen tanks struck with baseball bats. Also, galvanized garbage cans are used to imitate *kenong*, a set of bronze drums found in gamelan.

Even after building his own gamelan, Harrison still did not study traditional Indonesian gamelan in great depth. However, a chance for him to study Indonesian gamelan came in the summer of 1975. Harrison was invited by the Center for World Music in Berkeley to teach a course on intonation at the Second Berkeley World Music Festival. This festival brought together experimentalists as well as students of traditional gamelan. K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat also participated

in the Festival. Wasitodiningrat, also known as Pak Cokro, is a renowned Indonesian gamelan master who taught at the California Institute for the Arts in Valencia. Some of Pak Cokro's students also took a course with Harrison. This festival brought Harrison and Cokro together. Immediately after the festival, Harrison decided to study traditional gamelan with Cokro. At that time, Harrison taught at San Jose State University. To facilitate his intensive study of traditional gamelan, he invited Cokro for a residency there. Cokro also brought along his traditional gamelan, called Kyai Hudan Mas, which means "Venerable Golden Rain", to San Jose. The study with Cokro was fruitful. Harrison learnt more about the inner structure of traditional Indonesian gamelan, such as *lancaran* and *bubaran.*[12] As a result, Harrison became a competent traditional gamelan player, and he wrote more than fifty compositions for traditional gamelan.

From 1980 Onwards: A Culmination of Transethnicism

In 1980, Harrison was invited to teach in the music department of Mills College, where he had had his first teaching post in 1937. Mills College was very supportive of Harrison's compositional ideals, especially his interest in gamelan. The college provided Harrison with job security so that he could concentrate on

[12] *Lancaran* and *bubaran* are classic forms in traditional gamelan.

his various interests, including instrument building, composition and performance.

With the help of Colvig and one of his postgraduate students, William Winant, a third set of gamelan, which was modeled on a traditional Indonesian model, was built. This gamelan also has two sets of metallophone tuned to *pelog* and *slendro* and uses just intonation. They called one metallophone set Si Darius and the other Si Madeleine.[13] Si Darius is the *slendro* section and Si Madeleine is the *pelog* section. Apart from building gamelan, Harrison also formed a gamelan ensemble in Mills College and recommended Jody Diamond, a teaching assistant of Cokro, to the College as a competent instructor. Diamond was responsible for teaching traditional gamelan performance technique, while Harrison concentrated on teaching composition. Harrison, Diamond and their students performed both traditional gamelan pieces and newly composed gamelan pieces by Harrison on Si Darius and Si Madeleine.

In 1983, Harrison and Colvig made a trip to New Zealand, staying for half year. Finding themselves relatively near to Indonesia, they decided to visit. It was

---

[13] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

Harrison's first time to visit that country. A friend of his, Vincent McDermott, was also in Java at that time. Both men were gamelan lovers and composers. McDermott was also lecturing in Surakarta. He immediately invited Harrison to give lectures on his original gamelan works. This trip enabled Harrison to interact with Indonesians and to learn the reaction of Indonesian to his original gamelan works, which were controversial among traditional gamelan players in America. However, the reaction of Indonesians was generally positive. They were amazed that a foreigner was so interested in their culture and music, and that he was competent enough to write pieces for traditional gamelan.

Harrison and Contemporary Composers: Relationship and Influences

Lifelong mentor: Henry Cowell

Among numerous contemporary composers, Cowell had the closest relationship with Harrison and had the most significant influence on him. Their relationship was not just confined to that of teacher-student. Harrison was also a close friend of Cowell and his family.

After Harrison graduated from high school, he entered San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University). In the spring of 1935, he enrolled in Cowell's course, 'Music of the Peoples of the World,' offered through the University of California Extension Programs. Before Harrison enrolled in this class, he had already read Cowell's *New Musical Resources* and was fascinated by it. In September 1935, Harrison started studying composition with Cowell privately and continued doing so for approximately two years.[14] Cowell was an open-mind teacher who was largely free from traditional biases. He encouraged Harrison to explore the unlimited possibility of music. Cowell was not a conventionally trained musician, and this may explain his unorthodox pedagogical style. His advocacy of non-western music and non-traditional compositional

[14] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 319.

strategies, e.g. use of tone clusters and complex rhythm associated with frequency ratios, shaped the music of Harrison at different stages of his career.

One of the most prominent influences of Cowell was his interest in non-western music. The music and musical instruments Asia provided Cowell with great sources of inspiration. One example of an Asian inspired composition by Cowell is *Ongaku*, written in 1957 while the composer was visiting Tokyo and Kyoto. It is a work based on a Japanese theme but scored for a Western orchestra. It is a piece in the style of Japanese *gagaku* (雅楽) and *sankyoku* (三曲) music. *Gagaku* is a type of refined music performed in the Japanese imperial court. *Sankyoku* is a type of Japanese ensemble music with three instrumental parts: *koto, sanmisen* and *kokyu or shakuhachi.* Another example is *Concerto No.1 for Koto and Orchestra* (1961-2), which combines Eastern and Western music and instruments and became a benchmark for Harrison. Cowell's revolutionary works also opened a new path for the young composer to continue to explore throughout his life. Harrison used a similar approach combining Eastern and Western musical instruments in his *Pacifika Rondo* (1963), which includes parts for miguk'piri (a Korean double reed instrument), *kayagùm* (Korean zither), *daiko* (Japanese barrel drum), *zheng* (Chinese ancestor of kayagùm) and *sheng* (Chinese mouth organ).

Another important influence was Cowell's innovative approach to tonal production using traditional instruments. His *Banshee* (1925) incorporates a novel method of playing the piano including sweeping and plucking the strings and playing tone cluster with forearm or palm. These novelties can also be found in Harrison's piano works. For example, *Sonata no. 1* (1936) and *Reel, Homage to Henry Cowell* (1936), student works written while studying with Cowell, include forearm and palm clusters. Harrison even took one further step in non-traditional tone production. He used tack piano in some piano works. Tack piano is prepared by pushing thumbtacks into the hammers.[15] This preparation was not used by Cowell, and the origin of tack piano is rather obscure. It is believed that tack piano was first introduced in Paul Dessau's incidental music to *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (1946).[16] Although the tack piano was not invented by Harrison, Harrison was willing to explore new resources drawn from the works of other contemporary composers, not just restricting himself to those learned from Cowell.

---

[15] Neil C. Rutman, *The Solo Piano Works of Lou Harrison*, DMA dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983, 39.
[16] Fritz Hennenberg, 'Paul Dessau,' *Grove Music Online*, ed. L Macy (Accessed 12 May 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

In addition to encouraging the use of non-western musical instruments, Cowell always encouraged Harrison to explore new sound-producing media, i.e. any object that can be used to produce sound. Harrison was encouraged to find new 'instruments' in his surrounding environment. By searching in automobile junkyards and backyards, he assembled his own set of percussion instruments made out of brakes drums, flower pots and oxygen tanks. These new sources of musical sound ultimately led to the birth of the American gamelan. Although this instrument is designated a "gamelan", it is very different from the traditional Indonesian gamelan in its appearance, building material and resultant sound. Therefore, it is only conceptually in debt to its Indonesian model.

Cowell also encouraged Harrison to limit his compositional choices by only using three- or four-note motives when composing a work. Harrison referred these short motives as melodicles.[17] He composed his early piano works by manipulating these melodicles by means of transposition, inversion, retrograde, inverted retrograde, etc. Such processes may recall the procedures of serialism, however, melodicles are different from the prescribed rows of serialism. The notes used in a melodicle are restricted to few pitches associated with a functional

[17] Lou Harrison, *Music Primer* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1971), 1.

harmony or mode.[18]

As an enthusiast of modern dance, Harrison was sensitive to rhythmic components in his music. The rhythmic complexity of Cowell's works, e.g. piano works, had a special influence on Harrison's rhythmic procedure. Harrison experimented with cross-rhythms drawn from Cowell's music in his early work for percussion ensemble, *Fugue* (1942). The complex cross-rhythms added an interesting contrapuntal texture for his music.

In short, there is no doubt that as a lifelong mentor of Harrison, Cowell influenced Harrison significantly. Among the wide variety of influences, the transethnic approach in particular opened up an alternative path for Harrison in his composition.

Collaboration with John Cage

Cowell had a broad network of friends in the musical community, especially among experimentalists. John Cage was one of the members of Cowell's network. As early as 1933, Cage had had personal communications with Cowell. Cowell

---

[18] Neil C. Rutman, 46.

not only advised Cage to study composition with Schoenberg, who had a significant impact on the young composer's compositional philosophy, but also introduced Cage to Harrison in 1938. Both young men of a similar age[19] who shared similar musical ideals, they soon became good friend and maintained a lifelong friendship. At that time, Cage was newly married and embarking on a new stage of life. Wanting to be independent from his parents, he left Los Angeles, where he'd been raised, and drove to San Francisco. At that time, the most urgent thing was to get a job. Through Harrison, Cage received numerous job offers. Finally, Cage took a job in Seattle and worked there as a dance accompanist for two years. During this time period, Harrison was also working as a dance accompanist at Mills College. As a result, Cage was invited to the College for musical exchanges.

Both Cage and Harrison were interested in choreography and worked as dance accompanists. In addition, they were both interested in percussion music and believed it was the most suitable accompaniment for dance because of its strong rhythmic nature. These common beliefs drew them closer, and led them to present several joint concerts featuring percussion music in San Francisco. Their

[19] Cage born in 1912, and was five years older than Harrison.

performances received an enthusiastic response among San Francisco music circles.[20] The collaboration culminated in 1941 with the production of a joint work, *Double Music*.

Double Music is a work for percussion in four parts. The instrumentation features metallic percussion, including bells, brake drums, sistra, gongs, tam-tams and thunder sheet. Cage and Harrison each composed two parts and assembled them in alternation, i.e. Harrison wrote parts two and four, Cage wrote parts one and three. Although they wrote their portions separately, they made some joint compositional choices in advance, e.g. prescribing rhythmic figures and section lengths.

The collaboration between Harrison and Cage had it origin in their shared interests in modern dance and percussion music. Their love of percussive sounds gave birth to a new ensemble employing innovative sound media, i.e. "found" instruments from junkyards, including, brake drums, metal sheets, crates, iron

[20] A critic, Alfred Frankenstein, published a positive comment on Cage and Harrison's concert. "The Western concert music has much to learn from its orchestra step-children, the percussion instruments, was suggested last night at Mills College, ... We are still very far from the subtlety of rhythmic speech the Arabs and Indian get out of their little hand drums or the symphonic grandeur of the Balinese percussion orchestras, but such experiments as that of last night point toward interesting developments."
Alfred Frankenstein, "A Program of Percussion," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 28, 1939.

pipes, porcelain bowls and flowerpots. Harrison's love of "found" instruments ultimately became a special characteristic in his own music.

A Turning Point: Harry Partch

In 1949, Harrison received a book from Virgil Thomson and was asked to read it. This led to a drastic change in Harrison's compositional philosophy. This book was *Genesis of a Music* by Harry Partch. Partch was a radical experimentalist. Although he was often dismissed as an amateur by conservative contemporaries, his book included the best discussion of the history of tuning available. He abandoned the commonly adopted twelve-note equal temperament. Indeed, he regarded equal temperament as an "acoustic lie"[21] because it contains no pure consonances, except the octave. He invented a new tuning system with forty-three pitches in an octave. Within this new tuning system, pure consonances are possible. This pure tuning of intervals is based on mathematical ratios and is called just intonation.

This book gave Harrison a new stimulus. He was fascinated by Partch's use of just intonation, which aroused his interest in Western music theory, especially

[21] Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century,* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 79.

the tuning system of the ancient Greeks. By adopting Partch's 43-note tuning system, he hoped to revive the ancient Greek tuning system. Pure consonants were frequently used in his later works.

In order to facilitate the realization of works using just intonation, Harrison had to build his own musical instruments tuned with just intonation. By combining the percussive nature of Indonesian gamelan and the ideals of just intonation, Harrison built the first American gamelan called "Old Grand Dad".[22] Thereafter, Harrison was regarded as the "father of American gamelan."

Charles Ives

Charles Ives, is regarded as one of American's greatest composers, and can be seen as a forerunner of American experimentalism. He worked as a founding partner of the Ives & Myrick Insurance Agency. The insurance work bought him great fortune. Without financial worry, Ives could focus on novel experimental procedures in his composition.

[22] The details of American gamelan will be discussed in chapter 2.

As a mentor of Harrison, Cowell encouraged Harrison to explore Charles Ives's music. Through Cowell, Harrison wrote a letter to Ives in 1936, expressing interest in the latter's music. In return, Ives sent a large number of valuable manuscripts to Harrison. Later, during his stay in New York, Harrison was employed to edit Ives's works since the deterioration of Ives's health prohibited him from copying and editing. This provided a golden opportunity for Harrison to study music by the older composer that was unpublished or at least not well known by the public. By copying and studying his music, Harrison also became acquainted with the non-traditional procedures used by Ives, which influenced his compositional philosophy. For example, Ives's quarter-tone tuning for piano influenced Harrison in experimenting his idea of alternative tuning system other than equal temperament.

Chapter 3 Composing Otherness

Part I: *Concerto in Slendro:* An Anticipation of Asia

Background

Harrison liked to use the violin as a solo instrument against a percussion orchestra. Indeed, the use of violin appears to have had a special meaning for Harrison. Right before his nervous breakdown, he likened the solo violin to a "single person … pitted against or surrounded by the indefinitely large, expanded world of the modern orchestra."[1] The metaphor of a violin as a single person poised against the majority was not an absolutely new concept but captures another side of the "otherness" that Harrison sought to convey in his music. His metaphor reflects his unique standpoint, which differed from mainstream practice and set him apart. As an experimental composer, Harrison felt alienated from mainstream compositional practices.

In addition, the use of violin reflects his preference for music that features a single melodic part against a bold, rhythmic accompaniment, not unlike *rebab* versus gamelan in traditional Indonesian music. Long before the completion of

[1] Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, 55.

Concerto in Slendro, Harrison had experimented with violin and percussion in *Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra* (1959). He actually started composing this piece in the 1940s when he was working with Cage and Cowell in San Francisco. It was the first work for which Harrison provided detailed instructions about the construction of his homemade instruments.[2] There are twenty instruments in the percussion orchestra and most of them needed to be custom-made from mundane items like coffee cans, pipes of different lengths, brake drums, etc. The work was the starting point in his transethnic musical journey.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Harrison was invited to present a paper at the East-West Music Encounter Conference at Tokyo, April, 1961. Harrison boarded a freighter on 25 March, 1961, and during the long journey across the Pacific, he improved certain skills, especially those of instrument building and tuning. He also experimented with possible pentatonic scales within the octave. Finally, he devised two pentatonic scales without a semitone. He composed *Concerto in Slendro* during this long voyage and utilized these two newly devised scales in this work.

---

[2] Daniel A Burwasser, *Study of Lou Harrison's Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra and Concerto for Organ and Percussion Orchestra,* PhD dissertation, City University of New York, 1993, 18.

Although the instrumentation and form of *Concerto in Slendro* are very similar to those of *Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra*, *Concerto in Slendro* moves one step closer to a transethnic ideal. This will be discussed in detail in following sections.

Instrumentation

In this work, Harrison used violin as a solo instrument and various percussion instruments for the orchestra. Significantly, the violin assumes a prominent solo role. The writing for violin is reminiscent of the *rebab*, a two-string bowed instrument used in Indonesian gamelan. Unlike the percussion instruments in gamelan, *rebab* usually takes a solo role in gamelan music and is used to improvise on a *balungan*.[3] The percussion orchestra consists of a celesta, two tack pianos and two smaller percussion groups, identified as part 1 and part 2. The tack pianos are prepared by pressing thumbtacks into each hammer at the striking point. The two groups of percussion are grouped according to the pitch range of their gongs. Both groups contain three gongs. Part 2 has three gongs in a lower register while those in part 1 are higher. The other instruments in the two percussion parts are shown in table below:

[3] The concept of *balungan* will be discussed in the section of 'Compositional Devices' in this chapter.

Part 1	2 washtubs	3 gongs (high)	3 triangles
Part 2	2 garbage cans or pails	3 gongs (low)	3 ranch triangles
2nd Mvt.	celesta → pipes	tack piano 2 →	claves

Table 1 Instruments of Percussion

As in *Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra*, Harrison also includes meticulous instructions in the notes about the choice of percussion instruments and their preparation. His choice of instruments is eccentric. His employment of everyday objects, e.g. garbage cans, washtubs, plumber pipes and wood sticks, exemplifies his brand of innovative experimentalism. Although only the gong is an Asian instrument, the percussive nature and the sonority produced by the makeshift metallophones evokes the sonority of a gamelan, especially with the reinforcement of tack pianos. The juxtaposition of the violin and the eccentric percussion orchestra results in a big contrast. The violin is an instrument commonly used in Western music, while the instruments in percussion orchestra are eclectic and even eccentric. With this striking contrast, the "otherness" of the violin is intensified.

Tuning

As mentioned earlier, Harrison was an advocate of just intonation. In this work, he applied the concept of just intonation and combined the concept of *slendro* with just intonation. *Slendro* is one of the two tuning systems commonly used in Indonesian gamelan. Every complete set of gamelan has two tunings, *slendro* and *pelog*. *Slendro* produces a five-note anhemitonic[4] scale while *pelog* produces a seven-note scale. Harrison once described *slendro* as "wide second and narrow third" and *pelog* as "narrow second and wide third".[5] The adjective 'wide' and 'narrow' is based on the commonly used tuning in Western practice. Therefore, the 'wide second' of *pelog* is a little bit larger than the major second of equal temperament. The pentatonic scales in just intonation that Harrison devised resemble *slendro*.

However, the tunings of gamelans varies from one to next. For example, the *slendro* of one gamelan will not be the same as the *slendro* of the next. Although they are both *slendro,* there will inevitably be subtle differences of intervallic content. Literally, no two gamelans have an identical tuning. These subtle differences in tuning bring a unique quality to every individual gamelan.

---

[4] Anhemitonic scale means a scale without semi-tone.
[5] Lou Harrison, "Program Note," *Concerto in Slendro*, (New York: C.F. Peter Corporation, 1978).

Consequently, Indonesian musicians may comment on the "personality" of the gamelan by judging the unique tuning of the gamelan.

In the notes to *Concerto in Slendro*, the composer included the ratios used to tune the tack pianos and celesta. There are two different *slendro* used in this work. As shown in figure 1, the ratios in both scales are in whole number and in small numbers. These are the important features of just intonation, i.e. a system of tuning in which all of the intervals can be represented by ratios of whole numbers, with a strongly-implied preference for the smallest numbers compatible with a given musical purpose.[6] In figure 1, the lower row of ratios are the ratio with respect to the first degree of the scale. The upper row of ratios gives the intervallic ratios.

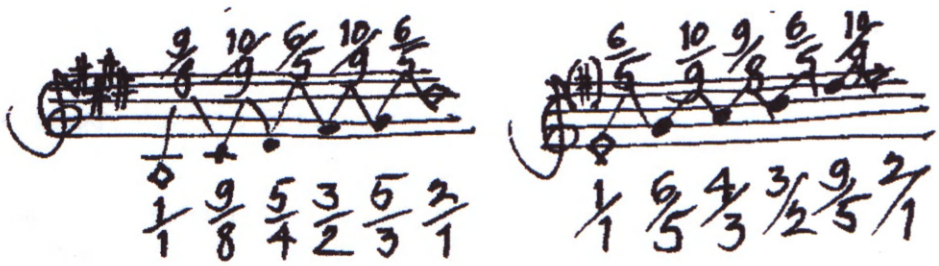


Figure 1 Ratios of Slendro 1 and 2.[7]

[6] Other Music Inc., 'What is just intonation?' (Accessed 14 May 2007), <http://www.iustintonation.net/>.

[7] Lou Harrison, "Program Note," *Concerto in Slendro*, (New York: C.F. Peter Corporation, 1978).

Movement	I	II	III
Mode	Slendro 1	Slendro 2	Slendro 1

Table 2 Mode and Movements

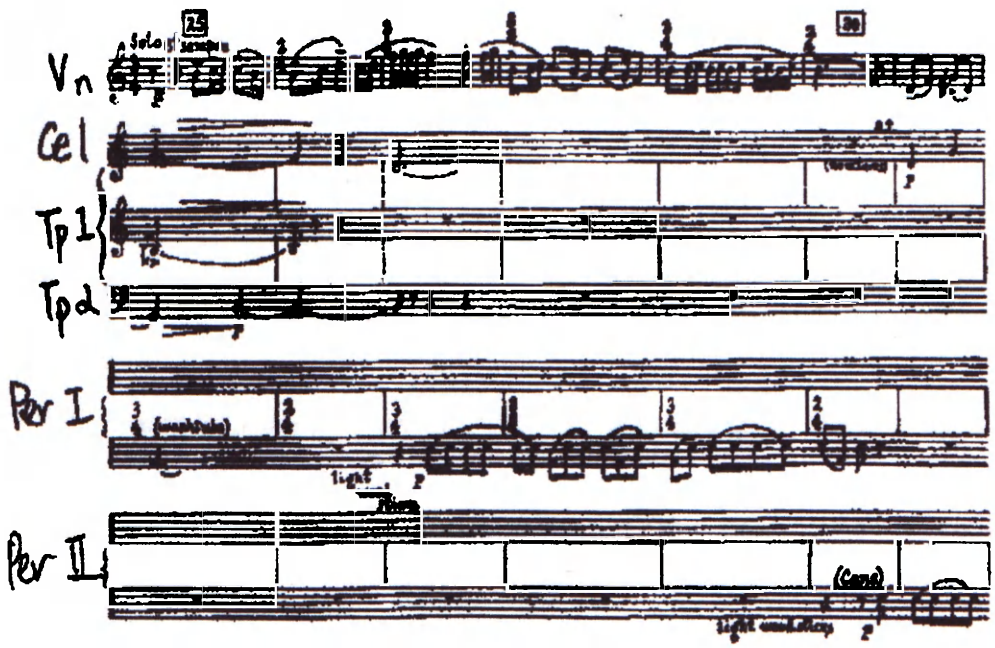
The *slendro* used here is inspired by Indonesian gamelan. The concept of "wide second and narrow third" is adopted in both *slendro 1* and *slendro 2*. Harrison mixed the idea of just intonation with *slendro*. All of the intervals in *slendro 1* and *slendro 2* are represented by ratios of whole and smallest numbers. These tunings satisfied Harrison's two preferences: just intonation and his love of Indonesian gamelan. The resulting transethnic effect is very original.

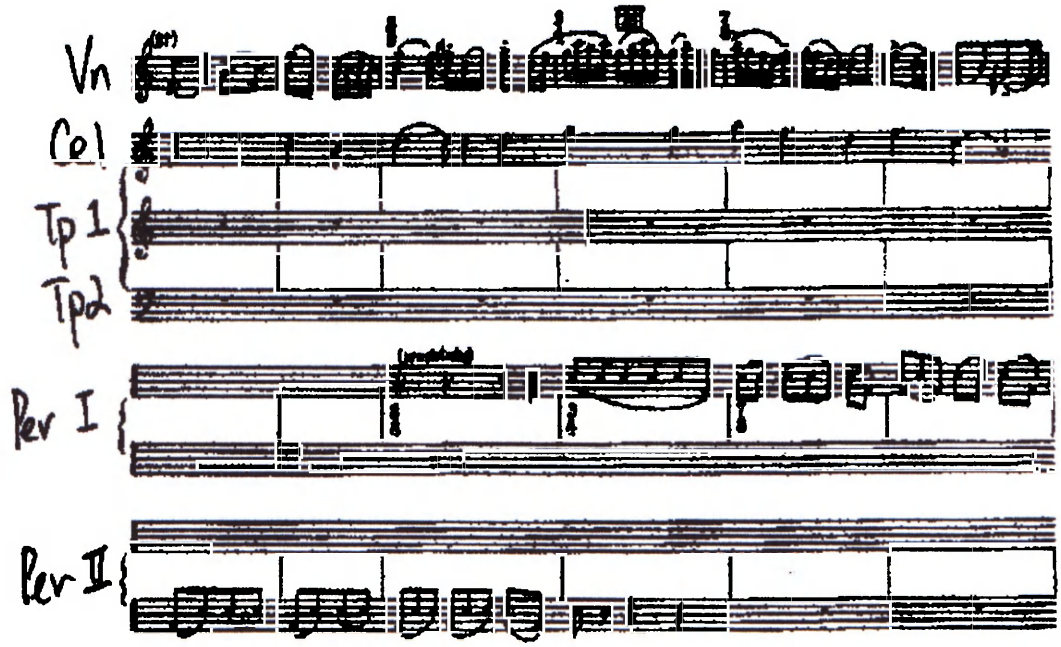
Formal Structure

Harrison chose to create a cross-cultural hybrid by employing a Western genre for this work, i.e. a Baroque solo concerto. It has three movements laid out in a standard fast-slow-fast sequence. In doing so, he reinforces the intensity of "otherness" which will be discussed below.

The thematic scheme in first movement, "Allegro vivo", uses a structure associated with ritornello form. This movement features contrasting solo and tutti

passages. It consists of an opening ritornello, two solo episode sections separated by abbreviated statements of the ritornello and ends with a repetition of the opening ritornello. The ritornello itself is scored for percussion orchestra. It develops into a fourteen measure statement (m. 1-14) that is repeated once. The opening ritornello leads to a solo episode section for violin with entirely new material at m.25. The solo section has a light accompaniment which places the virtuoso violin solo in high relief. The texture of the accompaniment here is much thinner than that of the ritornello. The two tack pianos are not involved in this section. Only the light wood sticks, washtubs and garbage cans provide accompaniment. Although the celesta also participates, it has a special role which makes it different from its neighboring parts. This will be discussed in detail in next section.





Example 1 *Concerto in Slendro*, First Movement, mm. 25-37 (first solo episode)

Following the first solo episode, there is a brief tutti ritornello which recalls the opening ritornello. The brief ritornello leads to a solo episode with new thematic material. The section starts with an expressive violin solo and ends vigorously. The movement ends with a repetition of the opening ritornello. However, unlike a typical ritornello form, there is no modulation throughout the first movement and it stays in *Slendro* 1 throughout.

The second movement is a slow movement with an ABAC form. It begins with a melody with lyrical and oriental melody in violin. The use of glissando and spare texture enhance the oriental quality. The solo violin is answered by the

percussion part. In section C, the violin and tack piano perform a canon at the interval of a fifth.

In contrast, the last movement recalls the tutti and solo structure that characterized the first movement. Here the celesta and tack piano perform a canon at the octave. The final tutti of this movement also recalls the first movement, enhancing the formal coherence of the whole concerto.

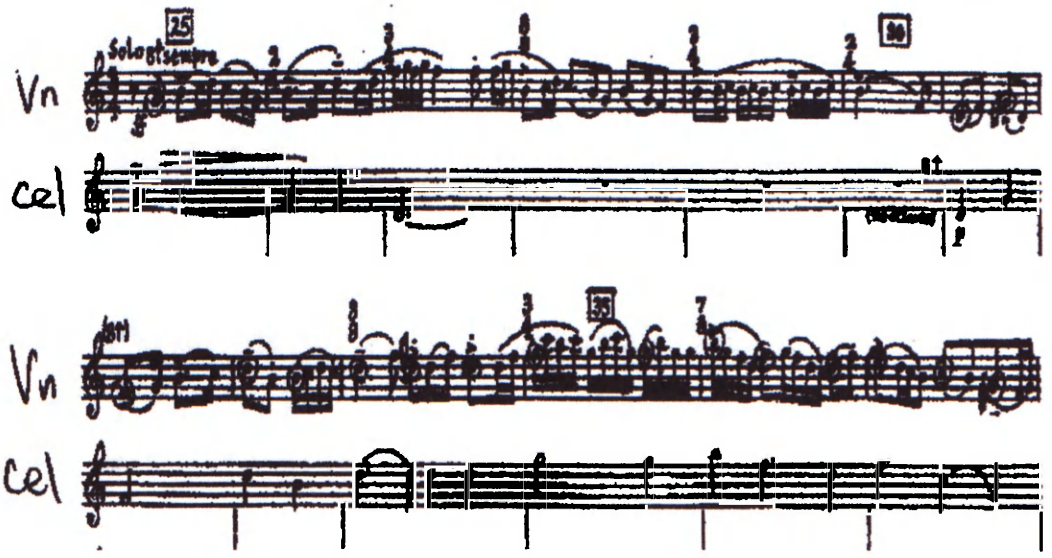
Although the form used in this work does not make any overt references to typical cyclic form of the music of the Indonesian gamelan, it provides a western frame for the transethnic tuning and sonorities. The western frame is very crucial for creating a sense of "otherness" in his music. Since the perception of "otherness" is relative, when placing the gamelan tuning and sonority within a Western frame, the "otherness" provoked by the transethnic traits can be reinforced by the frame making it more prominent.

Compositional Devices

Although there is no consistent use of traditional gamelan compositional procedure in this concerto, a close study of the work reveals scattered use of transethnic compositional procedures, especially from Indonesian gamelan. For

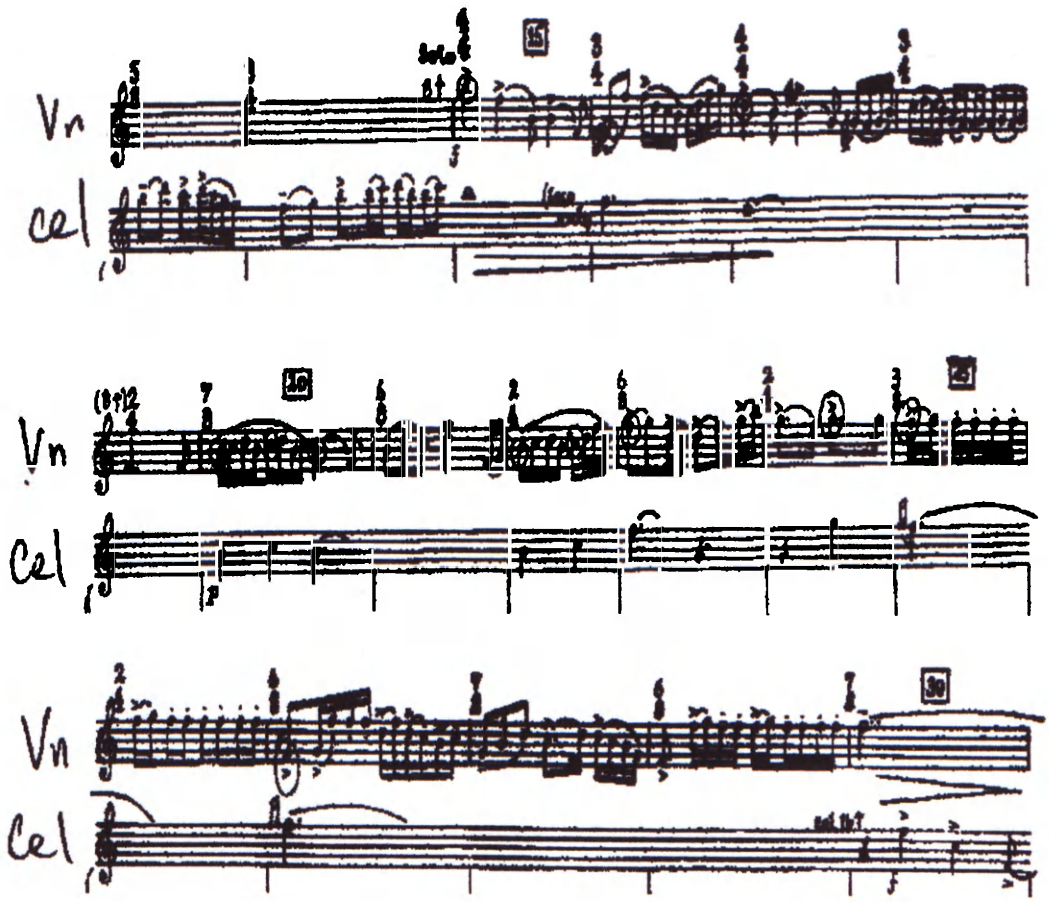
example, in the first movement, the use of *balungan* is found in the first solo episode. In mm. 30-39, the celesta plays the *balungan*. *Balungan* is a melodic skeleton which plays an important role in gamelan music. Traditionally, *balungan* is a four-note melodic pattern with the second and fourth notes being stressed. Although *balungan* is important structurally, it is not necessarily a prominent feature of the music. It may be hidden among the various layers.

In addition to celesta part, the violin line is also based on the *balungan*. However, it plays an elaborated version of it. The violin frequently plays the notes of *balungan* in unison with the celesta. The *balungan* notes in the violin part are emphasized by accents and at downbeats. In example 2, the circled notes in violin are the notes of *balungan*.



Example 2 *Concerto in Slendro*, First Movement, mm. 25-39 (use of *balungan*)

The use of *balungan* is also present in the last movement, "Allegro, molto vigoroso." This movement also adopts the contrasting tutti and solo passage, typical of ritornello forms. In the first solo episode, mm. 15-29, as in the first movement, the celesta plays another different *balungan* and the violin plays the elaborated version of it. This practice is similar to that of the Indonesian gamelan. The *balungan* instruments, e.g. metallophones in middle register *saron*, play the *balungan.* The solo instrument, e.g. *rebab* or vertical flute *suling*, play the elaborated version of it.

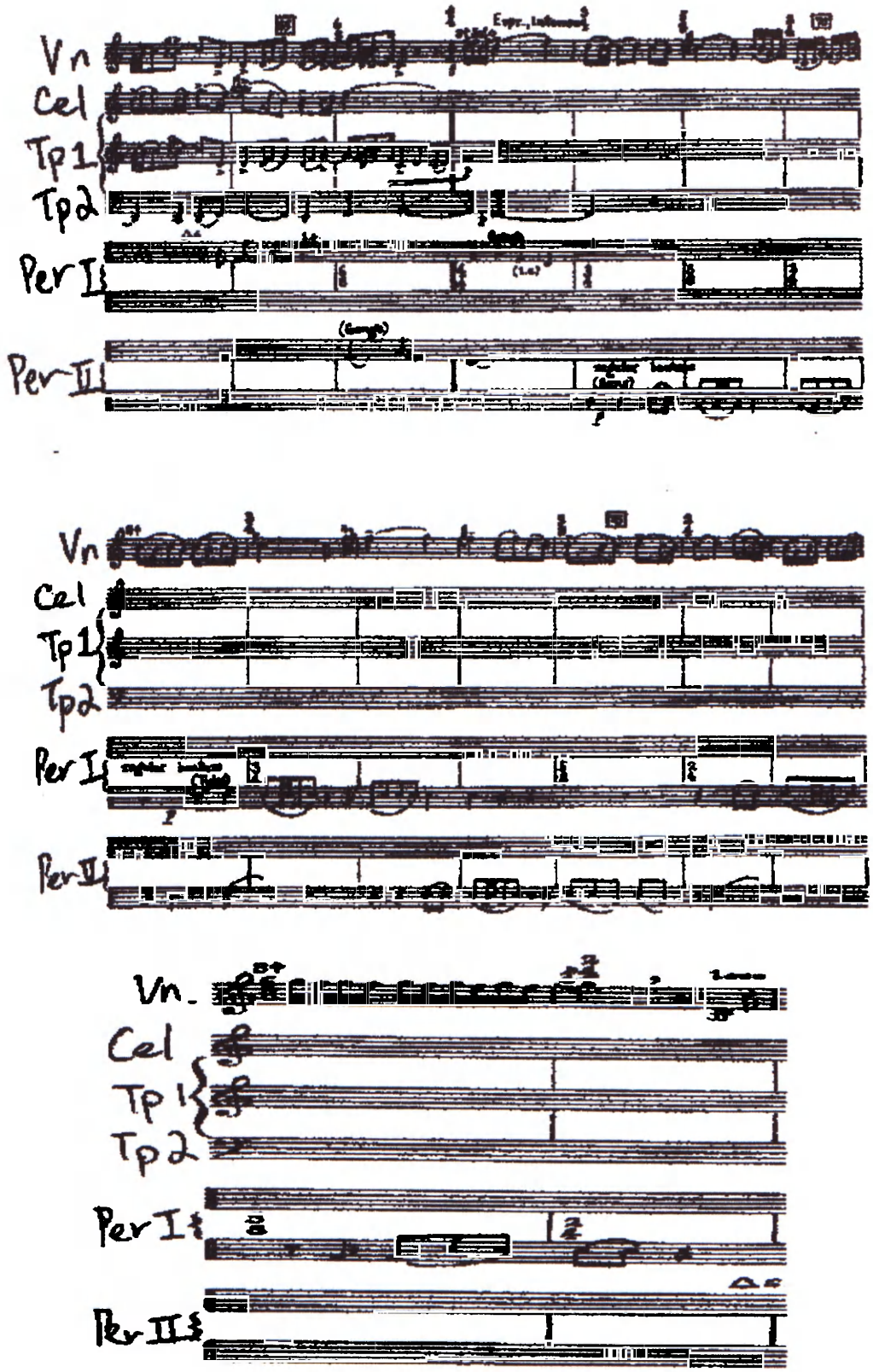


Example 3 *Concerto in Slendro*, Third Movement, mm. 15-30

In addition to the use of *balungan*, in the second solo episode, another transethnic compositional device can also be found. In mm. 67-79, the violin solo is accompanied by an ostinato for garbage can and washing tubs in alternation. Ostinatos have been widely used by Western composers, such as Debussy and Colin McPhee, at times with transethnic purposes, and the use of ostinato has long been associated with the transethnic references.[8] Although the use of ostinato in this movement by Harrison is rather brief, when considering it in connection with the *slendro* tuning, the use of *balungan* and the long tradition of ostinato and transethnic references, it is easier for audiences to comprehend the ostinatos used here had a transethnic effect.

---

[8] Richard Mueller, "Javanese Influence on Debussy's Fantaisie and Beyond," *Nineteenth-Century Music, 10 no 2 (fall 1986): 157-186.*
Carol J. Oja, *Colin McPhee: Composer in Two Worlds*, Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.



Example 4 *Concerto in Slendro*, First Movement, mm. 67-79. (use of ostinato)

By and large, these scattered references to Indonesian music do produce a substantial transethnic effect. They have to be considered along with the consistent use of tuning and sonority. These scattered transethnic musical materials possess limited importance in evoking a sense of "otherness" when compared with the consistent use of transethnic tuning and sonority. However, we should remember that this work was only a starting point for Harrison in his transethnic compositional life. It was written in anticipation of his first Asian trip. He would have more chances to learn about the essence of Asian music. The scattered use of transethnic musical material is only an anticipation of a change in his compositional life.

Part II: Transethnicism in the Mature Period -- *Varied Trio*

Harrison started to compose the *Varied Trio* in 1986 because of his friendship with his student, William Winant, who had enrolled in the postgraduate program at Mills College in 1979. As a graduate assistant of Harrison's at Mills College, Winant helped the composer build gamelans. In 1982, Winant and Julie Steinberg met at Harrison's sixty-fifth birthday concert, in which they both performed. Julie Steinberg was a pianist and a faculty member of Mills College. Steinberg subsequently introduced Winant to her husband, David Abel, a violinist. As a result of this meeting, the three of them became acquainted and conceived plans for a future collaboration. Later, Harrison composed the *Varied Trio* for the three. It was premiered on 28 February 1987, in Hertz Hall, at a concert series sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley. At the first performance, the *Varied Trio* was performed as a quintet in order to allow Harrison and William Colvig to perform at the premiere in addition to Steinberg, Abel and Winant. Instead of the piano part in the later published score, Steinberg played a virginal which was tuned to Kirnberger II.[9] Winant played the percussion part. Abel played the violin part. Harrison performed on a harp and Colvig performed on bells. The published version was transcribed by Steinberg under the supervision of the composer. The

[9] Kirnberger II is a tuning with all fifths are pure, except D – A and A – E. The thirds of C – E, G – B and D – F# are also pure.

following discussion will be based on the published score.

The *Varied Trio* is an excellent example of transethnicism in Harrison's mature style and also shows his wide range of interests. The *Varied Trio* has five movements. Each movement has a specific focus. I will discuss the first and second movements, which contain explicit transethnic references, in detail.

His interest in Asian culture, particularly Indonesia and India, is shown in the first and second movements. The first movement, titled "Gending," which is an Indonesian word, makes reference to Indonesian gamelan directly. The second movement, "Bowl Bells," calls for an Indian instrument, *jalataranga.* The fourth movement, "Rondeau, in Honor of Fragonard," shows his nostalgia for eighteenth-century French Baroque style. Although the third movement, "Elegy" and the fifth movement, "Dance", do not have specific transethnic references, these movements are related to Harrison's other life long interests. "Elegy" is a slow movement with all the parts unmeasured. The music is in free flowing style and the violin has an expansive melody, which echoes Harrison's general preference for melodicism. The fifth movement, "Dance," not only relates to his lifelong interest in dance but also exhibits his preferences for eccentric

instrumentation. The percussion used in this movement has great variety; it includes vibraphone, large tam tam, two tambourines, two drums and six baking pans in different sizes with random tuning.

First movement, "*Gending*": Influence of Indonesian Gamelan

With the given title of this movement, obviously, Harrison composed this movement with Indonesian gamelan in mind, particularly Javanese gamelan.[10] *Gending* literally means "piece" in English in general. In particular, *gending* is a type of colotomic structure, i.e. *gending* structure. It is the longest and the most complicated type. *Gending* usually has a prominent elaborating instrument, e.g. *rebab*.[11] Although Harrison does not strictly follow the traditional practice of Indonesian gamelan music, this movement bears similarities in tuning, instrumentation, composition device, sonority, texture and metrical organization with it. These parameters will be discussed below.

[10] Lou Harrison, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994,* edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), XLIX.
[11] Neil Sorrell, *A Guide to the Gamelan,* Faber and Faber, 1990, 70-3.

Tuning and Instrumentation

The first movement begins with a key signature of two sharps. Harrison uses a pentatonic scale without any semitone: D, E, F#, A, B. When considered in conjunction with the Indonesian title, this scale suggests *slendro*, one of the two tuning systems commonly used for Indonesian gamelans.

The first movement of *Varied Trio* is written for violin, vibraphone and piano. Unlike other pieces by Harrison, the composer did not request the instruments to be tuned to just intonation. According to an interview with the pianist after the premiere performance, Steinberg said the virginal used in that performance was tuned to Kirnberger II,[12] which is one of Harrison's favorite tunings for piano. In the vibraphone and piano parts, only notes within the pentatonic scale used are found. This choice of pitches corresponds with the metallophone part typical of a gamelan, the tuning of which is fixed and only notes within the scale can be played.

The violin part in the first movement has a solo role and mimics the role of *rebab,* a bowed two-string fiddle, which also has a solo role in Indonesian

[12] Ibid.

gamelan performance. In gamelan, the *Rebab* player performs his part in improvisatory manner. The player elaborates the part according to the specific *balungan* of the piece, which results in a heterophonic texture.

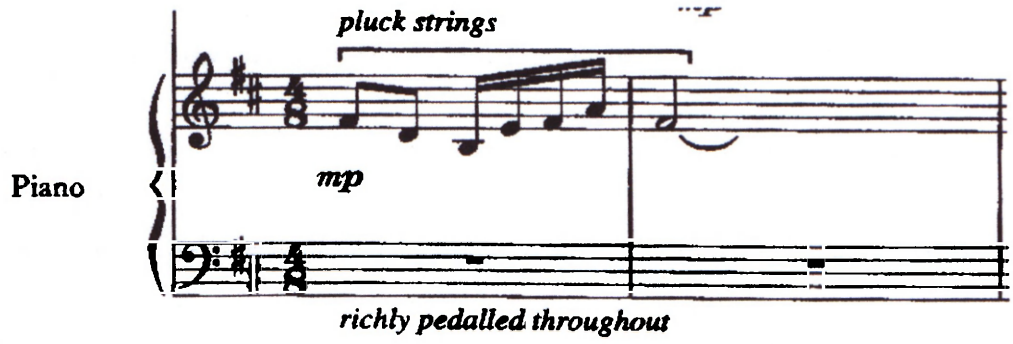
Although the violin part is notated completely, it suggests improvisation. In the published score, a note added by the violinist, Abel, reads "cantabile, rubato, play differently each time."[13] Although the part is written out, the composer allows flexibility on the part of the performer to make changes in every performance. This echoes the performance practice of Indonesian gamelan. Although there is no Asian instrument in this movement, transethnic elements are embedded in the Western instrumentation, especially the violin references to *rebab.* Harrison treats the violin as if it were a cross-cultural hybrid. Physically, it is a traditional Western instrument. Musically, it mimics the Indonesian *rebab.*

Compositional Devices

The first movement starts with the right hand of piano announcing the pitches that will be employed in this piece. This type of solo passage can also be found in traditional gamelan music where it is called *buka.* In this movement, the

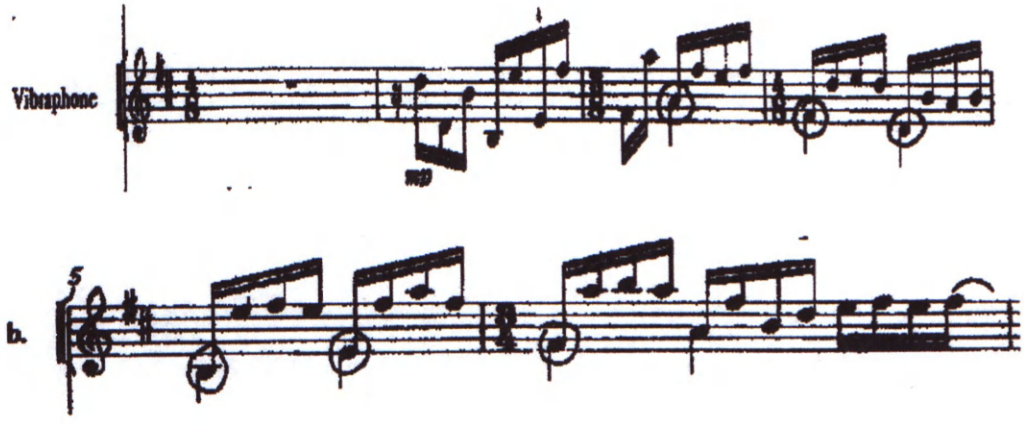
[13] Lou Harrion, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994,* edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), 64.

buka announces the anhemitonic pentatonic scale: D, E, F#, A, B.



Example 5 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 1-2

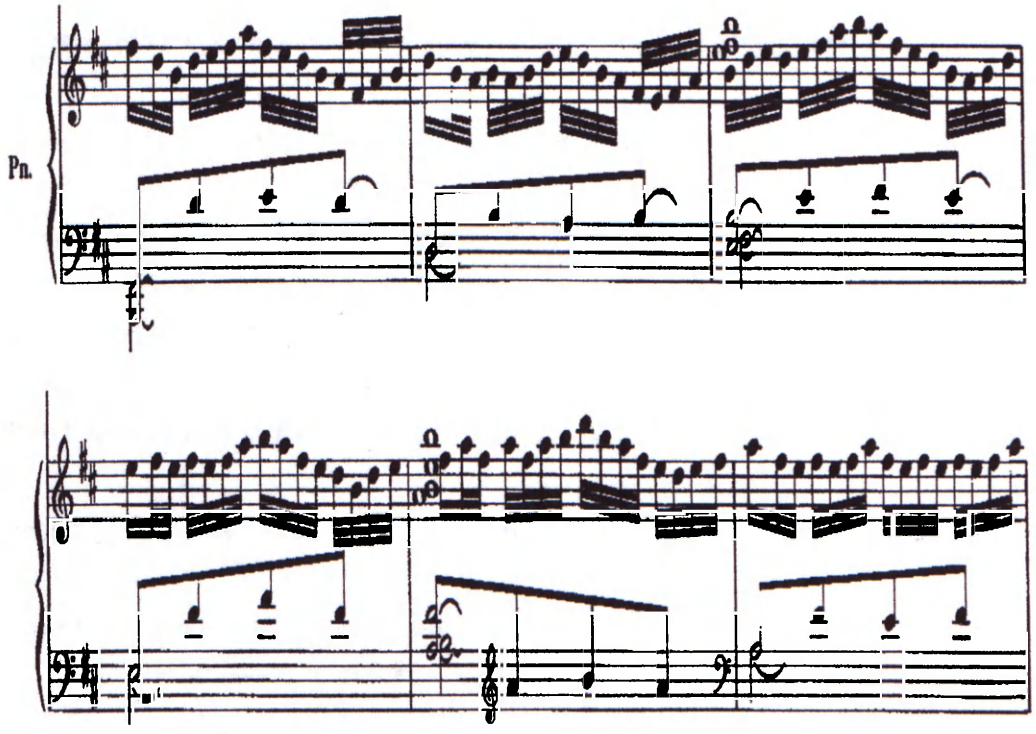
In this movement, the *balungan* first enters in the vibraphone in m. 3. The *balungan* used here has six notes: A-F#-D-B-E-F#, rather than the four-note pattern used in traditional gamelan. In example 6, the circled notes are the balungan.



Example 6 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 1- 6

In the treatment of *balungan*, Harrison does not strictly follow the

Indonesian traditional practice. The number of notes used in this *balungan* differs from that of a traditional work for gamelan and the regular accents of this *balungan* also differ from traditional practice. Instead of stressing the second and fourth notes, Harrison chooses to stress the fourth and sixth notes by adding a chord to them. For example, mm. 12-17 gives one cycle of the *balungan* with each *balungan* note set as a mimin. In m. 15, the *balungan* note, B, is accented by a chord. Also, in m. 17, the last *balungan* note of the cycle, F#, is accented by a chord. B and F# are respectively the fourth and final notes of the *balungan*, and this accentual pattern is maintained rigidly throughout the movement.



Example 7 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 13-18

Lastly, the *balungan* is not hidden in stratified layers. Instead, it can be easily heard in every layer but with different decorations. Notably on the downbeat of every bar, both vibraphone and left hand piano play the *balungan* note in unison. The *balungan* can be perceived by audiences easily. This echoes with Harrison's general preference for melody in his works, which was more or less consistent throughout his life.

Although the *balungan* in this movement does not strictly adhere to its traditional use, the way in which Harrison decorates and presents the *balungan* is very close to the tradition of Javanese gamelan. Firstly, the *balungan* of this movement recurs throughout the movement. The concept of *irama* is also present. *Irama* refers to changes in speed of the *balungan*, and it is related to the note density of the decoration of *balungan,* which will be discussed below in the section on "Texture and Metrical Organization." In traditional practice, there are five levels of *irama,* from fastest to slowest. In this movement, the *balungan* first enters in the vibraphone in m. 3 (see example 6). The *balungan* notes are set as crotchets. This is the original *irama* with each *balungan* note presented at the crotchet level. Upon the completion of the first *balungan,* in m. 7, the *balungan* moves to the next *irama* and each *balungan* note is set as a mimin. The second

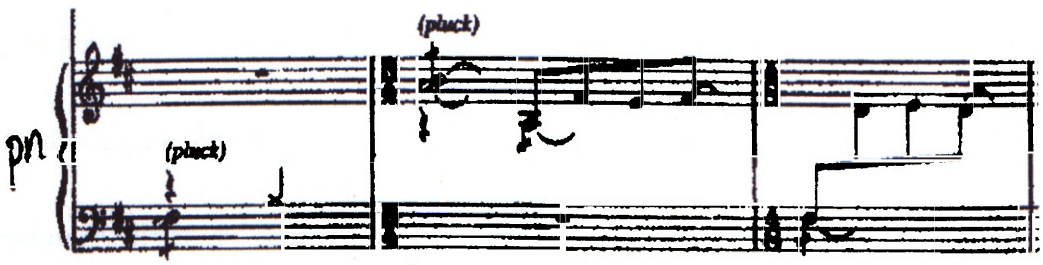
irama presents the *balungan* more slowly than the first *irama.* This allows a higher note density in the decoration. The *balungan* is repeated using the second *irama* but towards the end of the movement, at m.60 vibraphone part, the *balungan* returns to the original irama. The recurring *balungan* with different level of *irama* echoes the cyclic recurrence of *balungan* in Javanese gamelan music. Although the number of notes in *balungan* does not accord with the Indonesian traditional practice, there is no doubt that the idea of a recurring *balungan* is inspired by the traditional practice of Javanese gamelan.

Secondly, the chords accenting the fourth and last note of the *balungan* resemble the punctuating instruments in an Indonesian gamelan, e.g. *kempul* (small hanging gong) and *gong ageng* (big hanging gong). They are regarded as colotomic markers and *gong ageng* marks the end of a *balungan.* The recurring chords in this movement also take a colotomic role. The chords recur rigidly throughout this movement. These colotomic chords further reinforce the cyclic recurrence of *balungan.*

Lastly, another special feature in Javanese gamelan can also be found in this movement. The *balungan* is decorated by *mipil*, which refers to oscillation with

pairs of notes. The oscillations include the anticipated note and its upper or lower neighbors. One notable feature of *mipil* is to anticipate the next *balungan* note. However, Javanese music allows flexibility in performance and different musicians may use different embellishments for the *balungan,* especially if the instrumentalist has an improvisatory role, e.g. player of *rebab* and *suling*, a vertical bamboo flute.

In this movement, the *balungan* is decorated by *mipil* consistently, i.e. throughout the whole movement and in all instruments. For example, in mm. 6-7 of the piano part, the *balungan* note A enters on the second beat of m.6. The next *balungan* note occurs on the downbeat of m.7 and is F#. The *mipil* in m.6, F#-E-F# in quavers, anticipates the F#.



Example 8 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 5-7

Since the violin in this movement assumes a role that is similar to the *rebab* in gamelan, the pattern of anticipation does not appear as often as it does in the

left hand piano and vibraphone. Although the violin part has an improvisational style, the music still progresses in conjunction with the *balungan*.

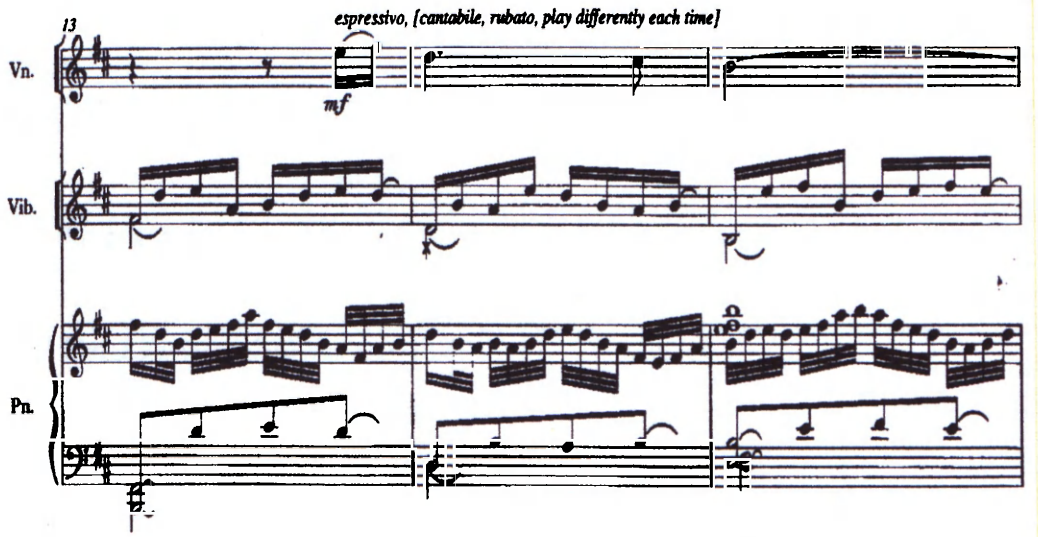
Obviously, the musical materials being used in this movement by Harrison are influenced by Javanese tradition. By applying these Javanese practices to his own variations for Western instruments, Harrison creates a highly unusual sound world. This mix and match of musical materials and musical instruments produces a very special interaction resulting in a transethnic effect.

Texture and Metrical Organization

The texture and metrical organization of the first movement also resemble that of the Javanese gamelan. The first movement is heterophonic, showing polyphonic stratification. Polyphonic stratification is one of the special features of Javanese gamelan. It can be regarded as simultaneous variation. In traditional gamelan, different instrumental parts execute the decorated *balungan* at varying rates. For example, the decorated *rebab* part is set to semiquavers and that of *bonang* part to quavers. The decoration of *balungan* in different parts can be presented in forms of elaboration and abstraction. The *balungan* unfolds with different rhythmic diminution and augmentation in the decorations, from high

note density to low note density, e.g. from crotchet to demi-semi-quaver. Even in the same *irama,* the note density will differ in different parts. In traditional gamelan music, the note density in the higher register is greater and density decreases from high register to low register. In another words, this diminution and augmentation is a gradual change in note density in various parts that results in stratification. Although each part has different note density, the pace of the *balungan* is the same within the same *irama*. Generally, a slower *irama* allows higher note density in its decorations.

In this movement, there are five layers in total. They are for violin, vibraphone, right hand piano, left hand piano and the recurring chord that first appears in the piano part in m.15. Each layer has a different rhythmic density and forms a stratum in the texture. The five layers do not enter simultaneously, and they first meet at m.15.



Example 9 *Varied Trio*, First movement, mm. 13-15

The piano right hand has the highest note density and occupies the highest register. The accented chord has the lowest note density. The root of the chord occupies the lowest register. This reflects the gradual decrease in note density moving from the highest to the lowest register. Table 1 shows the relationship of metrical organization and register in different layers.

Instrument / Layer	**Role in Gamelan**	**Note density**	**Register** (1-4, 1 is the highest)
Right Hand Piano	Elaborating, *bonang*[14]	Demi-semi-quaver	1
Vibraphone	Elaborating, *bonang*	Semi-quaver	2
Left Hand Piano	Slower-moving melodic instrument, *saron*[15]	Quaver	3
Accented Chord	Colotomic, *kempul & gong ageng*	Minum	4
Violin	*Rebab*	variable	1-2

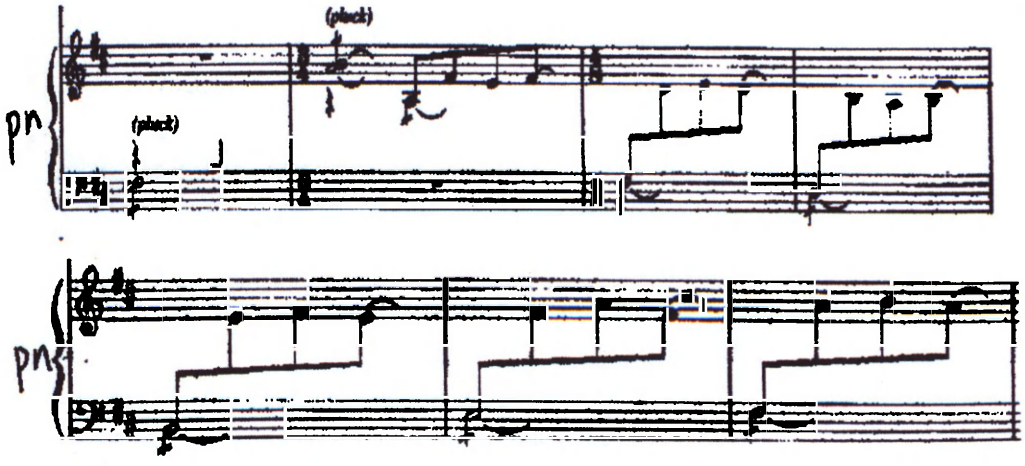
Table 3 The relationship of metrical organization and register

Sonority

The instrumentation of this movement also mimics the sonority of the gamelan. Aside from solo instruments, e.g. *rebab*, *suling*, *gambang*[16] and *celempung*,[17] the majority instruments in the gamelan ensemble are all metallophones. Although technically the vibraphone in this piece is the only percussion instrument, Harrison employs extended performance technique with the piano to produce a sonority that is reminiscent of gamelan. For example, in m.

[14] *Bonang* is an elaborating instrument in Javanese gamelan. It is a set of small bossed gongs placed horizontally in double rows. It has a wooden frame and the bossed gongs are placed on ropes which mounted on the wooden frame. The player plays with two beaters.
[15] *Saron* is a group of bar metallophones. The bars are made of bronze and placed on a wooden resonator. The player plays with single mallet. The note density in *saron* is closer to the speed of *balungan*.
[16] *Gambang* is a xylophone with big wooden resonator. The player is played with two mallets.
[17] *Celempung* is a pluck string instrument and similar to a horizontal zither.

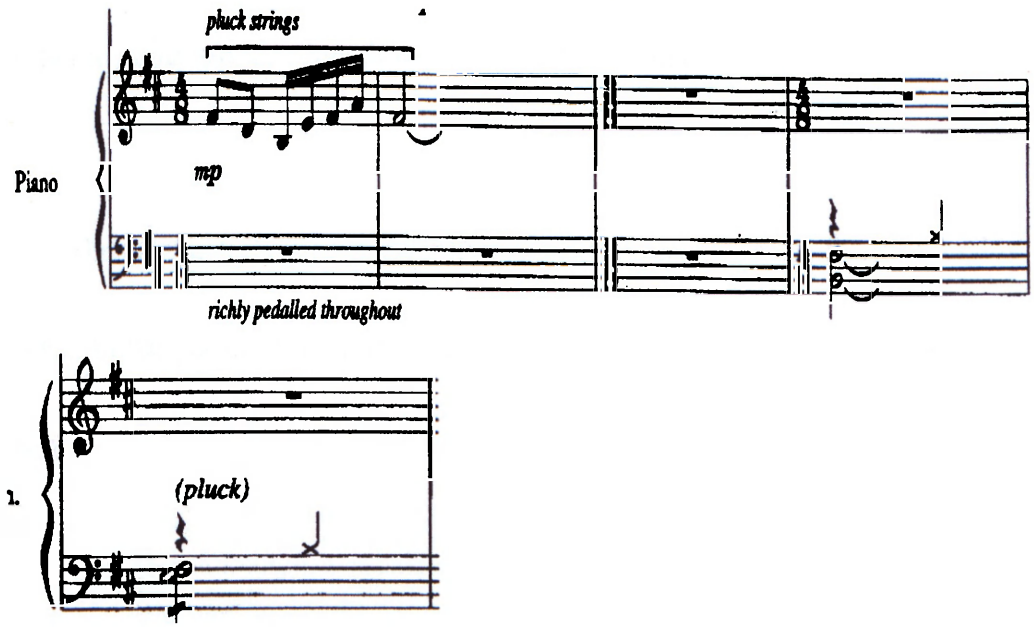
1, the pitches of the *buka* or opening solo section, are produced by plucking the strings of the piano. (See Example 5.) The sound produced by plucking the string makes the *buka* stand out. The use of plucked strings does not stop after the *buka*, and such plucking is also found in mm. 5-12. It is especially important to note that the first entry of the *balungan* in left hand piano is played by plucking the strings. The audience can easily perceive the special sonority of plucked strings in contrast to the decorating notes which are played conventionally. This special performance practice helps to emphasize the *balungan*.



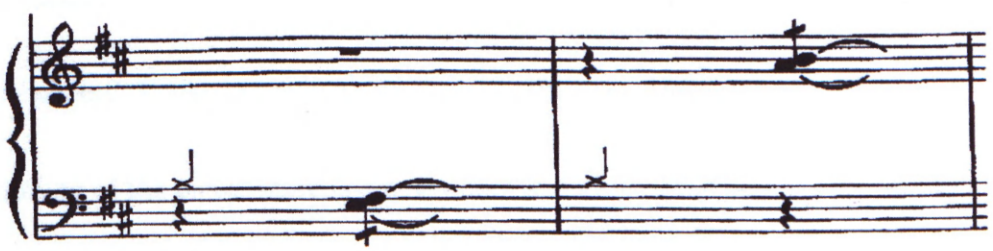
Example 10 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm.6-11

In addition to the plucked string method, other extended performance techniques are used. For example, in m. 5, the second beat of piano left hand is played by knocking on the steel frame inside of piano with a yarn mallet.

However, the crotchet played by knocking the steel frame is only called for when the balungan is performed at the crotchet level, both at the beginning of the piece, mm. 4-5 and at the end of the piece where the *balungan* returns to the original *irama*, mm. 61-62.



Example 11 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 1-5



Example 12 *Varied Trio*, First movement, piano, mm. 61-62

Knocking the piano steel frame provides another colotomic marker. In Indonesian gamelan, the notes played by gong have more structural significance and announce the end of every *balungan*. Even though there is no parallel to this gong within the movement. Striking the frame serves a function like that of the *kempul*, a kind of small hanging gong in gamelan, which is played alternatively with the gong and also functions as colotomic marker.

Harrison clearly placed great importance on the colotomic function in this piece. In the performance notes, he made the following comment on the piano part:

> Slurs without a terminal note in the piano part indicate "LV" (let vibrate or laissez); a rest after these incomplete slurs does not imply a release; simply allow the sound to die away gradually.

This special performance note emphasizes how the sound produced by the piano is to fade out. It also helps to evoke the sonority of gamelan. Also, at the beginning of the piece, there is a note about pedaling in the piano part: "richly pedal throughout." Since pedal is applied throughout the piece, once the string is struck, it will continue to vibrate without being stopped by the replacement of the damper. As a result, the sound produced by the piano will fade out slowly, similar

to the sound produced by the metallophone gamelan. While the sound is fading out, the music is still progressing and a richly resonant sound results overall.

Second Movement, "Bowl Bells": An Excursion to India

It is well known that Indonesian gamelan strongly influenced Harrison. However, we should not overlook other Asian influences, e.g. Indian, Korean and Chinese. In the second movement, Harrison brings his audience to the music of India. The title tells the audiences what instruments will be used. In the performance notes, the composer calls for Chinese porcelain rice bowls:

> Chinese porcelain rice bowls should be struck with chop sticks. Do not strike the bowl directly on the rim, but rather hit them from the inside near the top edge.[18]

Although this equipment recalls mundane Chinese household items, this set of instruments, which comprised of rice bowls and chop sticks, is actually an Indian musical instrument called *jalataranga.* Harrison first heard a recording of *jalataranga* in the 1930s. In addition, Henry Cowell, Harrison's mentor, also called for *jalataranga* in his *Ostinato Pianissimo* (1934). Indeed, it is not the first time Harrison used *jalataranga* in his work. In *Pacifika Rondo*, the composer also calls for it.

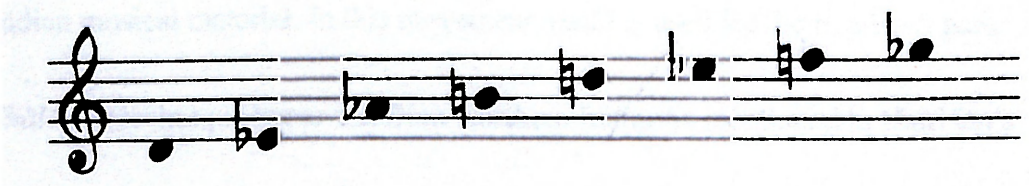
---

[18] Lou Harrion, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994,* edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), 62.

To perform this movement, the performer needs to set up the instrument. The porcelain rice bowls are arranged in a semi-circle and water is poured in. The bowls are filled with water and tuned to a specific *raga. Ragas* are the melodic modes used in Indian classical music. The raga also comprises a set of rules for how to build a melody. Usually, a *raga* consists of five to seven notes. Since there are more than 300 different *ragas* in Indian music, it is difficult to classify different types. One of the most straightforward methods to classify *raga* is by the number of *swara. Swara* means pitch in English.

In order to have the precise tuning as indicated in the performance notes, Harrison gives hints to the performers in tuning the rice bowl by a dropper:

> Tuning should be approximate as closely as possible the pitches given in the diagram below; tuning can be adjusted, if necessary, **by adding water to the bowls using a dropper.**[19]



Excerpt 13 Rice Bowl Tuning[20]

However, it is quite difficult to keep the tuning of a *jalataranga* stable, especially in a concert hall setting. Harrison had an interesting experience in

---

[19] Lou Harrion, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994,* edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), 62.
[20] Ibid.

tuning the *jalataranga*. In an interview, he recalled a concert in San Francisco at late 1960s:

> When we had them sounding quite beautiful, we put Saran Wrap over the top and went out for a nice Chinese dinner. We came back, took the Saran Wrap off and played the piece. But the bowls went "funk" instead of "ping." None of us was aware that water standing in a bowl over time forms bubbles that insulate it from the sounding body. The remedy is either pour water back and forth many times or to use glycerin as a wetting agent.[21]

Learning from this experience, Harrison realized there is a need to keep the tuning of an instrument stable and sought out a solution by using glycerin. However, his insistence in the precise tuning of the *jalataranga* deviates from traditional Indian practice, which will be discussed in following paragraphs.

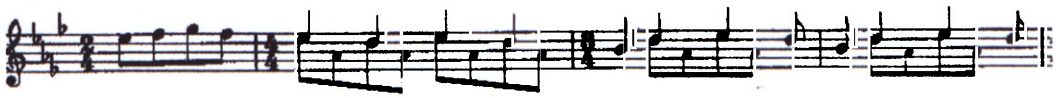
Other than the use of Indian instrumentation, the composer also called for Indian musical material. In this movement, *jhālā* is used for the rice bowl part. *Jhālā* is a technique borrowed from Northern India. As mentioned in Harrison's *Music Primer,* there are two types of *jhālā*, described as "India's answer to Alberti Bass."[22] The second movement only uses one form of *jhālā*.[23] This type *jhālā* is the intermittent reiteration of a single tone between the notes of the main

---

[21] Leta E. Miller and Ferdric Lieberman, "Lou Harrison and the American Gamelan," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (1999), 153.
[22] Lou Harrison, *Music Primer,* (New York: C. F. Peter, 1971), 39.
[23] In *Music Primer,* Harrison describes the other type of *jhālā* as "only consists of the rapid rhythmic reitertion of the melody tones themselves."

melody.[24] In the performance notes, the composer explains the type of *jhālā* used in this movement:

> The repeated lower note is smaller in size to indicate its function as a *jhālā* (the intermittent reiteration of a single tone between the notes of the main melody taken from Indian practice); these smaller notes should be played more softly than the other pitches.[25]



Example 10 Varied Trio, Second movement, rice bowl, mm. 10-13

In the movement, the A-flats are the *jhālā* and are reiterated intermittently with the main melody, as shown in Example 10. Similar to Indian practice, the *jhālā* used here serves as a drone for the piece. It also provides a bass note for the designated *raga*.

In traditional Indian practice, *jhālā* is treated as a bass note of a *raga*. A *swara* builds up the *raga* by means of a prescribed intervallic content. Throughout this movement, the tuning of the rice bowls is unchanged, and there are no accidentals in the rice bowl part. This indicates that the intervallic content

---

[24] Lou Harrion, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994*, edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), L.
[25] Lou Harrion, *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994*, edited by Leta Miller, (Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998), 62.

between different *swara* and *jhālā* remains constant. The constant intervallic content echoes a feature of Indian *raga*.

However, there is a slight difference regarding the choice of concert pitch of *jhālā* used in this movement. The tuning of the *jalataranga* is precisely given by Harrison in the program note. Technically, the tuning of the *jalataranga* is fixed and therefore, the *jhālā*, which is A, is also fixed. It is different from the variable concert pitch of *jhālā* in traditional Indian practice.

Although the main focus of this movement is on Indian influences, Harrison does not completely abandon the Western compositional procedures. As marked in the score, the movement is in rondo form, ABACA:

Section	A	B	A	C	A
Measures	1-27	28-46	47-73	74-115	116-143

Table 4 Rondo form of second movement

By and large, the second movement is another example of Harrison's transethnic work. The second movement's transethnicism is different from that of

the first movement. In the first movement, no Indonesian instrument is used. All the instruments that Harrison chose are Western. The movement reflects the Indonesian influences via tuning, performance practice and compositional devices, such as stratification in texture, the use of cyclic recurrence of *balungan* and *mipil*. However, in the second movement, apart from the use of Indian musical materials, i.e. *jhālā*, the Indian elements also include the choice of Indian instrument, i.e. *jalataranga*. The use of *jalataranga* with violin and piano is a transethnic combination. It produces a remarkable contrast. Therefore, the quality of "otherness" provoked by the *jalataranga* is further intensified.

Other than the contrast in the instrumentation, there is another kind of contrast in the second movement. Through the use of rondo form, the Indian elements are blended within a Western framework. This kind of transethnicism is similar to that of the *Concerto in Slendro,* which also has a Western concerto form.

Conclusion

Close examination of *Concerto in Slendro* and the selected movements of *Varied Trio* reveal the transethnic elements used in these pieces. The use of transethnic elements raises questions about the cultural implications of Harrison's music. His interest in the transethnicism raises intellectual issues involving the borrowing and appropriation of music from non-Western sources, particularly east-west power relations.

Transethnicism in experimental music successfully evokes a musical 'otherness'. The notion of difference has an important role in the perception of 'otherness.' When identifying one thing as unlike the others, we are dividing the world; from one perspective it is an attempt to distinguish something and possibly exclude or discriminate against it.[1] However, the legitimacy of labeling one group as 'different' from another inevitably involves unequal power relations. One group may assert authority over another. It is not just claiming its legitimacy in labeling the difference, but to control it. One of the central texts of post-colonial studies, Edward Said's *Orientalism*,[2] provides useful insights for our present discussion. By employing Foucault's post-structuralist techniques,

---

[1] Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin Group, 2003).

Said analyzes nineteenth-century European literature on non-European cultures. He defines Orientalism as the academic study of "the East" and interprets interest of Europeans in non-European cultures as attempts not only to understand "Eastern culture", but also to administer and subjugate 'the Orient'.

Said's approach can be adopted in questioning the power issue associated with musical appropriation. For example, does the transethnic endeavor in experimental music suggest a colonialist impulse? Metaphorically, experimentalists are explorers. They sail in an open sea in search for 'new terrain.' The 'new terrain' is the culture and music from the distant non-Western land. They import the unfamiliar elements to expand their musical territory. This process has been labeled microcolonialism.[3]

For Harrison, transethnicism was a crucial impetus to his expanding musical territory. In this sense Harrison, as an explorer of new musical resources, is the equivalent of a colonialist, but one operating in a musical terrain. The numerous musical resources around the globe are his goals. He searched for potential resources and imported them to his terrain. He incorporates the "other" elements

[3] John Corbett, 166.

within his music by appropriating and re-presenting them. The new music resource acts as a tool to reinvigorate his compositional arsenal.

But such a heavy-handed reading of Harrison's impulses is much too simple. His development of the American gamelan is a good example of the complexity of this situation. His American gamelan was inspired by the Indonesian gamelan as well as the concept of just intonation. His invention does not attempt to imitate its Indonesian counterpart or incorporate it as an exotic instrument within a Western context. Rather he created a new musical resource that reflected his idiosyncratic tastes and experience. The birth of the American gamelan was the product of Harrison's love for percussion, just intonation and Indonesian gamelan. Consequently, although transethnicism can be seen as a form of musical appropriation, for Harrison, it also appears to have another, deeper meaning, i.e. to evoke "otherness," to create a unique identity for himself as an experimental composer.

The construction of "otherness" identity in Harrison's music involves the attempt to escape from the Eurocentric mainstream. The use of transethnic elements in his music constructs musical alterity and distances himself as the

"other". The transethnicism in Harrison's music in this way dislocates him from that mainstream and establishes his identity as experimental composer. Of course, many experimental composers have also used transethnic elements to do something similar, and in the process have they established a shared musical identity based on alterity.

Bibliography

Books:

Bellman, Jonathan, eds. *The Exotic in Western Music.* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998.

Born, Georgina, and David Hesmondhalgh, eds. *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Brett, Philip, Gary Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood, eds. *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Cameron, Catherine M. *Dialectics in the Arts: The Rise of Experimentalism in American Music*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

Crawford, Richard. *The American Musical Landscape.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

D'Emilio, John. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Fuller, Sophie, and Lloyd Whitesell, eds. *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Garland, Peter, ed. *A Lou Harrison Reader.* Santa Fe: Soundings, 1987.

Grout, Donald Jay, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music.* New York: Norton & Company, 1996.

Harrison, Lou. *The Music Primer.* New York: C.F. Peter Corporation, 1971.

Hubbs, Nadine. *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Koskoff, Ellen. *Music Cultures in the United States: An Introduction.* New York: Routledge, 2005.

Lindsay, Jennifer. *Javanese Gamelan.* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979.

McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

Miller, Leta E., and Fredric Lieberman. *Lou Harrison: Composing a World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

----------. *Composing a World: Lou Harrison, Musical Wayfarer.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004.

Minow, Martha. *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Nicholls, David. *American Experimental Music, 1890-1940.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Oja, Carol J. *Colin McPhee: Composer in Two Worlds.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.

Reyes, Adelaida. *Music in America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Rockwell, John. *All American Music: Composition in Late Twentieth Century.* New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin Group, 2003.

Solie, Ruth A., ed. *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Sorrell, Niel. *A Guide to the Gamelan,* ed. Martin Hatch. Ithaca, New York: Society for Asian Music, 2000.

Struble, John Warthen. *The History of American Classical Music: MacDowell through Minimalism.* New York: Facts on File, 1995.

Von Heidi, Gunden. *The Music of Lou Harrison.* Metuchen, NJ.: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1995.

Chapters in a book:

Lubet, Alex J. "Indeterminate Origins: A Cultural Theory of American Experimental Music." *Perspectives on American Music since 1950,* ed. James R. Heintze, 95-140. New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

Miller, Leta E. "The Art of Noise: John Cage, Lou Harrison and the West Coast Percussion Ensemble." *Perspective on American Music, 1900-1950*, ed. Michael Saffle, 215-63. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Nicholls, David. "Avant-garde and Experimental Music." *The Cambridge History of American Music,* ed. David Nicholls, 517-534. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Olsen, Dale A. "Globalization, Culturation, and Transculturation in American Music: From Cultural Pop to Transcultural Art." *Reflections on American Music: The Twentieth Century and the New Millennium,* ed. James R. Heintze and Michael Saffle, 265-90. New York: Pendragon Press, 2000.

Rivera, Rhonda. "Homosexuality and the Law." *Homosexuality: Social, Psychological, and Biological Issues,* ed. William Paul, James D. Weinrich, John C. Gonsoirek, and Mary E. Hotvedt, 324. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1982.

Stokes, Martin. "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music." *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes, 1-27. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994.

Journal Articles:

Becker, Judith. "One Perspective on Gamelan in America." *Asian Music* 16, no. 1 (1984): 82-9.

Boriskin, Michael. "An American Original Lou Harrison: His 'Personal' Piano Music." *Piano & Keyboard,* no. 73 (1995): 30-4.

Chou, Wen Chung. " Asian Concepts and Twentieth-Century Western Composers." *Musical Quarterly* 57, no.2 (1971): 211-229.

Cone, Edward T. "In Defense of Song: The Contribution of Roger Sessions." *Critical Inquiry* 2, no. 1 (1975):97.

Diamond, Jody. "Out of Indonesia: Global Gamelan." *Ethnomusicology* 42, no. 1 (1998): 174-83.

Glimore, Bob. "The Climate since Harry Partch." *Contemporary Music Review* 22, nos. 1-2 (2003):15-33.

McDermott, Vincent. "Gamelan and New Music." *Musical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1986): 16-27.

Miller, Leta E. "Lou Harrison and the Aesthetics of Revision, Alteration, and Self-borrowing." *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no.1 (2005):79-107.

Miller, Leta E., and Fredric Lieberman. "Lou Harrison and the American Gamelan." *American Music* 17, no. 2 (1999): 145-77.

Mueller, Richard. "Javanese Influence on Debussy's Fantaisie and Beyond." *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 10, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 157-186.

Nicholls, David. "American Music: Transethnicism and the American Experimental Tradition." *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (1996): 569-94.

Perlman, Marc. "American Gamelan in the Garden in Eden: Intonation in a Cross-Cultural Encounter." *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (1994): 510-55.

Thomas, Dwight W. "Lou Harrison's *Double Concerto for Gamelan, Violin and Cello*: Juxtaposition of Individual and Cultural Expectations." *Asian Music* 15, no. 1 (1984): 90-101.

Thesis and Dissertation:

Burwasser, Daniel A. *A Study of Lou Harrison's "Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra and Concerto for Organ and Percussion Orchestra."* Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1983.

Rutman, Neil Clark. *The Solo Piano Works of Lou Harrison.* DMA dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983.

Score

Harrison, Lou. *Concerto in Slendro.* New York: C. F. Peter Corporation, 1978.

----------. *Selected Keyboard and Chamber Music, 1937 – 1994*, ed. Leta Miller, Madison, Wis: The American Musicological Society, 1998.

Information from Internet

Hennenberg, Fritz. 'Paul Dessau.' *Grove Music Online*. ed. L.Macy. http://www.grovemusic.com (Accessed 12 May 2005).

Other Music Inc., 'What is Just Intonation?' <http://www.justintonation.net/> (Accessed 14 May 2007).